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"MY OWN CHILD."

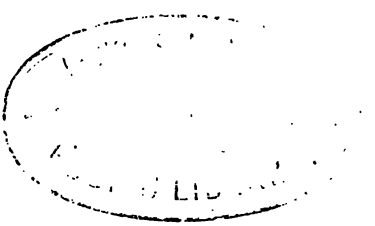
A NOVEL.

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT,

AUTHOR OF

"THE POISON OF ASPS," "NO INTENTIONS," "LOVE'S CONFLICT," "FIGHTING THE AIR," ETC.



"There is, in all this cold and hollow world, no fount
Of deep, strong, deathless Love, save that within
A Mother's heart." HEMANS.

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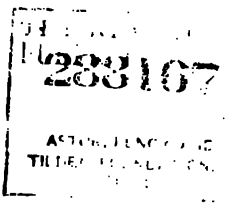
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
549 & 551 BROADWAY.
1876.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TO

MY OWN CHILD,

ETHEL MAUDE ALPE,

AND TO HER HUSBAND,

EDMUND NICHOLAS ALPE,

I OFFER THIS FAINT REFLECTION

OF A FEELING IMPRESSED ON MY HEART IN COLORS

WHICH NEITHER

TIME NOR CIRCUMSTANCE WILL HAVE

THE POWER TO FADE.

"What is it? Ask the King of Kings,
Who hath decreed above,
That change shall mark all earthly things
Except—a Mother's Love."

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"MY OWN CHILD."

CHAPTER I.

THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY."

as a sultry afternoon in the latter May, and I was sitting, or rather , all by myself, in the drawing-room Tessie's cottage at Guildford.

well I can remember the appearance tmosphere of that stuffy little draw- ! I have but to shut my eyes to the old-fashioned chairs set primly he wall; the spindle-shanked, rick- s, tottering beneath the weight of ndian boxes, and frail morsels of at threatened to come down with ouch; and the faded water-color that plastered the paper with un- atches, and looked as though they wept over till all their tints had shed out.

ed that drawing-room, which con- ich a mass of rubbish in the shape work, shell-work, and bead-work, among a few articles of real value, uld neither move quickly in it, nor ud without coming in violent con- . Aunt Tessie's notions of propriety, for the safety of her possessions.

Tessie's notions of propriety were ct indeed. I had been brought up orely against her own will, since I years old, and I have often specu- her first feelings of dismay when l that her brother and his wife had d in India, and bequeathed their ghter (with the very slender patri- orded by the Military fund) to her protection.

rotection—that is to say, the protection of her house and name—Aunt Tessie certainly bestowed upon me, but I experienced very little of her care. She suffered me to grow up beside her, and that was all. I had come without warning, a very unwelcome guest, to break in upon the orderly routine of her maiden life—and Aunt Tessie would not allow my presence to interfere with her more than was absolutely necessary. I was fed, clothed, and educated like a gentlewoman; but I was never permitted to forget that I stood alone in the world. No kind of restraint was laid upon me, excepting so far as extreme propriety in the house was concerned. I chose my own companions, and visited those whom I liked best, always supposing they were in my own class of life—indeed, I think Aunt Tessie was glad of any reasonable excuse to get me out of the cottage, where the free remarks and unrestrained manners, which she had never taken the trouble to curb, too often offended the ears of her old-maid companions. Yet she was not unkind to me: many people thought she was far too indulgent, and that I was a regularly spoiled child. But I had never known what it was to be folded to a warm-hearted bosom, or to feel the tears or caresses of affection on my cheek. All my earliest recollections were of the little cottage at Guildford, and my own childish wonder why I might not call the lady who was so kind and yet so stiff with me, "mamma," as other children called their guardians. Once I proposed doing so, or perhaps even tried how it would sound, to the ineffable horror of my aunt, whose unpolluted blood curdled and virgin cheek flushed at the bare idea.

"Whatever can have put such an extraordinary notion into the child's head?" I heard her confide to a sympathizing female friend; "and after the care with which I have tried to train her! It was most inconsiderate of my poor brother to lay such a charge upon me. It may be the ruin of my character before I have done with it!"

No! Aunt Tessie, although an excellent woman after her kind, was unemotional; there is no doubt of that; and, after these many years of separation, I wonder how it happened that I was not more unhappy while in her charge. For I was of a warm-hearted, ardent temperament, and at the time my story opens had just completed my fifteenth year. In some things I was much more forward than a girl of my age should have been; in others I was as backward as a child. I had a profound and varied knowledge of the world as it is to be learned from works of fiction; but of the real life that went on around me I had been kept in utter ignorance. The starched old governess who came daily to instruct me (and whose ideas of female decorum were after Aunt Tessie's own heart) I never dreamed of in any light than as of some one who was to be got rid of as soon as possible; and it was not likely that I should have taken much interest in the acquaintanceship of the doctor, the clergyman and his wife, and two or three old maiden friends of my aunt's, who were all the company admitted within the walls of Ivy Cottage. I knew plenty of boys and girls of my own age belonging to the residents of Guildford; but Aunt Tessie would as soon have thought of asking the inhabitants of the Zoölogical Gardens to tea as of admitting my unruly playmates within the sacred precincts of her dining and drawing room. So I seemed to have grown up with two faces, like a little female Janus. One was the proper, prim face which I kept for home and the sake of peace, and which, when not engaged in preparing lessons for Miss Drayton, was generally occupied in devouring such old-world romances as Aunt Tessie's small library afforded me; the other, *a wild, madcap countenance*, which looked *all eager for a good romp* at blind-man's *buff, or a race over the adjacent* meadows—anything, indeed, which should deliv ears from the infliction of hearing a d sion on the best cure for tic-douloure the probability of the exact date of the lennium.

In fact, my young blood was beginni effervesce from the lack of excitement daily routine, and threatened sometim run right over for want of a safety-valv was growing old enough to feel and ch my dull existence, and to long for any cl —never mind what, so long as it w change.

I was feeling this want more than on the afternoon of which I speak; an when Aunt Tessie came into the dra room, attired in the most antique of sl pinned tightly across her narrow shou and the most old-fashioned of draw bonnets closely confining her long, thin to ask if I would accompany her to some of her friends, I recoiled with h from the idea—I knew too well what lengthy visits on a hot afternoon entail

"What! on such a broiling day as Aunt Tessie? You'll be roasted alive. thermometer must be at six hundre ninety, if it is at one."

"I wish you would not speak in su aggerated terms, Katherine. Take you off that stool, my dear; you cannot changed your shoes since you came in the garden! and you know how often I requested you—"

"Bother the stool!" I cried as I erently kicked it from me: "it's only a dust, Aunt Tessie; it wouldn't hurt a

"The principle is the same, Kath whatever the actual damage done may p Now, see how you are lolling back in arm-chair, and without an antimacassa hind your head, too! I cannot think Miss Drayton can be about, to let su infringement of good manners pass ticed. There is nothing, to my mind, more marks the lady than due attenti these little duties. 'Les bienséances société—'"

But at this juncture I yawned and dr myself up into a sitting pōsture. "Les séances de la société" were such old fr —or rather enemies—of mine.

ıere are you going, Aunt Tessie? ;atch a fever from this sun. It's ıan August, a great deal."

ıin, Katherine! How often am I d you of the same error? I do not that the names of the ladies I intend will possess much interest for you, .rly as you decline to accompany I shall leave you to prepare your ır Miss Drayton; and you can urn in the garden when it grows

so Aunt Tessie—as delighted, I felt to avoid the pleasure of my com- I was to see the last of her—quietly ıe door behind her, and left me to devices.

book I was reading, and which my l evidently mistaken for a French ıan grammar, was Miss Burney's ı." Nowadays I should hardly have ɔnce to wade through such a mass nental twaddle; but at fifteen the for romance and adventure has not ɔd, and I was devouring every word ɔvel with eager interest. I longed accompanied Evelina to the Rane- dens, and to have received the gal- ıations of all the fops and beaux of —or rather night. I should even ɔd to have been entrapped down a ɔy, and had a handkerchief stuffed mouth, and to have been carried off vicked lordling, unable to cry for d delivered out of his toils at the ıent by my intrepid lover.

y don't such things happen nowa- I mused, discontentedly. "Every- so commonplace and stupid—there ıance left anywhere. I wish I could ɔ stage, or be an operatic singer—or g-sweeper—or anything but what I ıy, it would be twice as much fun with a broom at the corner of a d watch all the people that went by, ! out my hands for halfpennies, as this poky little hole with Aunt Tes- ish I could fall awfully sick—I do— ı to be sent away to the seaside, and y escape on board some ship in *lothes, and be put to climb* the rig- *all that. Oh! how I do hate* this life, and Miss Drayton, and Aunt Tessie, and all the lot of them—"

But here my reverie was interrupted by the sound of a strong, young voice shouting over the garden-wall:

"Kate! Kate! I say, Katie!"

"That's Hugh Power," I thought to myself lazily, and then the voice commenced again:

"Kate! where are you? I want you. Here, Kate!"

I shook the hair out of my eyes, and rising, with my book in my hand, walked slowly to the open French window. The back garden, which consisted of a long, narrow strip of ground, well grown over with shrubs and flowers, was inclosed by a low wall, sitting astride which I perceived the loose, muscular figure of a young Irishman, who was supposed to be finishing his studies with Mr. Dean, the rector.

"What do you mean by making such a horrid noise?" I exclaimed, with childish familiarity. "Aren't you afraid Aunt Tessie will hear you?"

"Not a bit of it; for the old cat has just walked into the rectory garden, and I took the opportunity to slip over here. Come out into the fields with me, Katie."

"I can't—it's so hot."

"It isn't hot—there's a lovely breeze just sprung up. Besides, I know a place where it's all trees. (How jolly you do look, with your hair hanging over your face!)"

"It's horrid!" I cried, using my favorite expression, and trying to push my hair away from my heated cheeks. "You can't think how it makes my head ache; and Aunt Tessie won't let me put it up into a chignon. She says I'm too young—just like her, the horrid thing! Whatever I ask for, she always says I'm *too young*."

"It's not a fault she can accuse herself of," said Hugh, laughing. "Come, Katie, don't be lazy. Do come for a walk. And you are looking *so* pretty this afternoon."

There was not much point in the last remark, but I felt my face grow hotter as he made it, and my eyes sought the ground. It was the first time I can remember experiencing any feeling to tell me I was n longer a child. It pleased and frighter

me both at the same moment, and I forgot to answer Hugh's request.

"Well, won't you come?" he repeated.

"Yes, I will," I said, suddenly, "if you will wait till I get my hat."

I threw "Evelina" on an adjacent chair, and ran up-stairs to the attic which was called my bedroom. It was the most untidy, comfortless little place possible—untidy, because by nature I was careless and impatient, and no one had ever taken the trouble to point out to me how much my nature interfered with my well-doing—comfortless, because, besides a gingerbread-covered Bible, which I never opened, and a bulging Church-service, which represented to me the dullest hours of my dull existence, when I accompanied Aunt Tessie to the parish church, there was not a single sign about it to tell of that sweet hope and communion that, never leaving us, appears more close, perhaps, when we seek our beds at night than at any other period spent outside the sanctuary. But at that time of my life, what did I know of a higher one, or the pleasure it is capable of affording? To all intents and purposes I was a little heathen, who gabbled over a senseless formula to her unknown God morning and evening, and had but one idea while engaged upon His worship—how to make the time pass most rapidly.

I brushed back my untidy hair, crowned it with a broken-rimmed hat, and flew back to my companion, who meanwhile had lighted a cigar, and was defiling the currant-bushes that lined the wall with its unholy incense.

"Oh! don't smoke," I cried, although I vastly admired him for being able to smoke. "Suppose Aunt Tessie were to smell it, and find out you had been here, what *would* she say?"

"Smell it, you little goose!—what! out in the open air? It would take a longer nose even than Aunt Tessie's to do that. But come, Katie, you must climb over the wall. I daren't go through the house and *out at the front-door, for fear I should meet her face to face; and then, I suppose, you 'ld never be allowed to come to tea at otory again."*

"No, never, Hugh!" I replied, with a mournful shake of the head.

"And what should I do *then?*" he went on inquiringly.

I did not answer; and, jumping down into the garden, he raised me in his arms, and placed me on the top of the wall.

"There you are," he said; "and now you must scramble down the other side by yourself. Out of the way, Kate! Here I come!" And with one bound the long legs came vaulting over the brick-work.

"What a great, strong fellow you are, Hugh!" I said, admiringly, as we walked away together.

CHAPTER II.

"BUT YOUTH COMES NEVER BACK AGAIN."

He *was* a splendid young fellow, of that type which possesses too much animal power in youth, perhaps, to make an intellectual old age, but which yet can inspire us, while it is young, with the profoundest admiration. His muscular limbs, still rather loose and disjointed (he was but twenty-one), were enormous in their length and girth; his chest was like a tower of strength; his hands and feet powerful and large.

He had golden-brown hair, that curled crisply and closely to his head; a small mustache, and the first indications of a strong beard.

His gray-blue Irish eyes, characteristic of his nation, were alternately flashing with humor or anger, or softened by emotion; but his feelings were so transient that none of his moods lasted long, and an April day is less variable than he was.

I had made his acquaintance at the house of our old rector, who kept guard over some half-dozen unruly lambs of the same pattern; but none of them had ever ventured to brave the dangers of Aunt Teresa's garden to pay me a visit except Hugh Power.

He was the only son of one of the richest and oldest Catholic families in Ireland, and it was matter of wonder to some people that his father should have placed him with Mr. Dean, or that Mr. Dean should have accep

he charge. But when a clergyman marries n an income that is not enough for two, nd multiplies himself by twelve in consequence, there is no saying to what extent he nay be called upon to sacrifice his inclinaions to his necessities before he sees a way ut of his difficulties. So, whether Mr. Dean would have chosen Hugh Power as a pupil r not, I am unable to say; but I am quite ure that, if Hugh Power had not chosen Ir. Dean as a tutor, he would never have been laced there. Self-will was one of the predominating characteristics of that young nan's nature; and he was considered too recious a creature at home to be thwarted n anything. So, whatever may have been is primal reasons for selecting the rural ome of the rector of Guildford as the scene f his final studies before going to college, here he was—and thence he had no present ntention of removing himself.

As I looked up at Hugh, and spoke admiringly of his feat of strength, he took the ompliment quite as a matter of course.

"Why, what would you have a man be?" e answered proudly. "Not a little tender reature like yourself, eh, Katie?"

"I wish Aunt Tessie could hear you call e 'tender,' Hugh. She says I am the greatst hoiden she ever saw, and much more ke a boy than a girl," I said, slyly, as I oked up into his face.

"Well, I think you're much more like a l than a boy; so never mind what the old oman says. I'll race you to the top of that ll for twopence, Katie."

"Done!" I cried, setting off at the top my speed.

But though my legs were tolerably long s for my height, and I was as slender as reed, and as light as a feather, muscle won day; and when, panting and out of eath, I arrived at the top of the hill, it was nd Master Hugh waiting to receive me, hout—to use his own expression—a hair ead.

"What a shame!" I said, laughing, as I bled against him. "I'll never race with again. I believe you did it on purpose ake me look *worse than I did* before. *re is the brim of my hat?*"

About your throat, like a necklace of straw. You held it down at the weakest point, Katie, and it gave way all round. Don't take it off! you can't think how becoming it is."

"What a wretch I must look! If Aunt Tessie could only see me now, I should have a dose of 'Les biensèances' for the next week at least."

"You look beautiful, Katie! Your cheeks are like roses, and your eyes as bright as—"

"Oh! don't talk to me like that, Hugh!—I wish you wouldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because it isn't truth," I answered, shyly, longing all the time to hear him say it was.

"It *is* truth, Katie—at least, I think so."

"*Really?* Am I really pretty, Hugh?" I inquired, with my cheeks glowing and my eyes on the ground.

"I think you are the prettiest little girl I ever set eyes on; and what's more—"

"What's more?" I repeated, after a pause, finding he did not continue.

But Hugh had suddenly turned shy like myself; he grew red, and changed the subject.

"The sun is full in our faces here, Katie; let us cross the next field, and get into Farmer Ridley's long meadow; it's so beautifully shady there."

He took my hand as he spoke, and I turned and followed him, and we went like two children through the field together. Not quite like two children, either. I cannot tell of what Hugh was thinking; but as for myself, a new world seemed suddenly to have opened before me—the world I had longed to enter—and I was wondering whether a new experience, of which I had often dreamed, was about to make its first appearance at the same time.

We entered Farmer Ridley's meadow in silence, and took our way beneath the flowering hedges that inclosed it.

"What lovely May!" I exclaimed, as we came in sight of a hawthorn in full blossom, which looked like a gigantic wedding bouquet.

"I will get you some," said Hugh, as he tore off large bunches of the fragrant flowers, and placed them in my ruined hat and the bosom of my dress.

"I love the May, as I have cause to do," he added, somewhat more seriously.

"What cause?"

"Don't you know that it is our Lady's flower? The churches are all decorated with it this month. We call it the month of Mary."

"I wish you wouldn't talk such rubbish!" I cried, irreverently. I was so young, and so completely ignorant of the doctrines of any church (the one in which I had been reared, included), that I was always disposed to laugh and feel ill at ease when the subject of religion was even alluded to. But Hugh Power, who was perfectly conversant with all matters that related to his own faith, was not only shocked, but hurt at my exclamation. I could see it in his face.

"What do you mean by 'rubbish?'" he said shortly.

"Oh! about the Virgin, and all that sort of thing. I am sure Aunt Tessie would be awfully angry if she thought you talked to me about it. And I don't believe it either, you know—of course I don't; how should I?"

"No! I don't suppose you do," he answered quietly, as he took the bunches of hawthorn from my hat and frock again, and threw them over the hedge.

"Why do you take away my May?" I said plaintively. I was already sorry I had offended him.

"It is no longer any pleasure to me to see you wearing it, Katie."

"Well, if you *will* huff so easily, you must. Irishmen always have bad tempers."

We strolled on in miserable silence together for a few minutes, and then I could stand it no longer.

"Hugh!"

"Well, Katie!"

"I'm so sorry I said that!" I murmured, slipping my gloveless hand into his. "I didn't mean it, you know—at least, I suppose I didn't. Don't be angry with me, Hugh."

"I am not angry—only it hurt me."

"Well, I won't hurt you any more. I will believe anything you wish me to."

"But you say all Irishmen have bad tempers."

"I didn't mean that, either; I r you—you were very unkind, to make —unhappy, Hugh!" I commenced w ing. His handsome young face cle in a minute.

"My darling Katie," he said, kiss "don't cry. I love you so, dear. indeed. And you may say anythin world to me, Katie, except ridic faith."

"I didn't mean it," I sobbed, b tone that showed signs of being com

"If you knew how I feel about th we mentioned, you would never spe as rubbish to me. Why, Katie, I of and think that, if ever I have a d I *couldn't* call her by any name bu it is so sacred and so sweet to me."

"You look very like a papa," claimed, laughing at the boy's earn "You silly old fellow! You'll be about your grandchildren next."

"Well, if I live, I suppose I s married some day. Would you lik married, Katie?"

"I am not sure. Sometimes I would (if he were very nice indee then at other times I think I woul go round the world and seek adventu

"How can a girl seek adventures she has a husband to seek them wi And what do you call 'very nice Katie?"

"Oh! I don't know," I said, b "Rich, and young, and handsome— that, I suppose."

"What a terrible list of virtues man to possess! To be young and easy enough, I suppose—at least, lots ple are young and rich—but to be ha and '*all that*,' into the bargain, is a poser. How much does '*all that*' Katie? Would there be any prospec riving at the end of its requirements

"You are laughing at me now, but you know what I mean. I w marry a boy like Fisher, for instar anything."

"No, because Fisher is plain, an mers, and is more than half afraid into the bargain. But if a fellow lo *very much*, Katie—"

"Yes."

"And had plenty of money to support you and get you nice things—houses, you know—and horses—and—"

"And boxes at the theatre, and a carriage, and lots of caramels."

"And to be able to take you to Paris and Italy, and all the other places you have so often longed to see—"

"Oh! that *would* be charming!" I interrupted, clapping my hands. "Fancy being away from Aunt Teresa, and able to do anything I liked!"

"Would you marry a fellow like that, Katie?" continued Hugh, wistfully.

I stopped short in my rhapsodies and considered. "Not if he were Fisher," I said stoutly.

Hugh laughed.

"Not for all that money?"

"Of course not"—indignantly. "What, that freckled little wretch?"

"Well, Gordon, then? He's good-looking enough."

"I don't like Gordon," I answered, quickly.

"Whom *do* you like, Katie?"

"No one," I began, but halted and grew red.

"Not *me*, dear?"

"Oh, Hugh!" and the tone in which I uttered his name, I suppose, encouraged him to go on.

"Kate," he said, hurriedly, "you laughed at me just now for talking about getting married; but I'm quite old enough to be married, you know. I came into my property last month. I am my own master, and there is no one who has the right to say 'No' to me. I want to be married, darling. I want to be married to you."

"Now, Hugh—at once?" I exclaimed, looking hurriedly round me, as if I expected a parson to appear immediately upon the scene.

"Not before we get home," he answered, laughing. "But look here, darling. Will you?"

"Of course I would. Only Aunt Tessie will never let me, Hugh."

"But if Aunt Tessie said 'Yes?' Will you *come with me to Paris, and see all the theatres?*"

"O Hugh! how jolly!"

"You consent, then, Katie?" And as Hugh spoke he put his arm round my waist and drew me closely to him; and I felt that the new world had opened, and that it was all very delightful, and pleasant, and enchanting.

"I shall wear a wedding-ring," I said, with sudden glee.

"Yes, and a diamond one above it. Nothing will be too good for my dear little wife."

"And I shall be called 'Mrs.,' sha'n't I, Hugh? I shall be Mrs. Hugh Power?"

"Of course you will; and Lady Power some day, when my poor old dad dies."

"O Hugh, I *should* like it very, very much," I whispered, overcome with the prospect of my approaching grandeur. "Only what *will* Aunt Tessie say?"

"She will have no right to say anything but 'Yes.' It is *your* business to decide, Katie. And you say you will be Mrs. Hugh, don't you?"

"Yes," I answered, in a very subdued voice. I was but a child in my brimless hat and common school-room frock—a child in mind, and manners, and experience, no less than in dress; and yet, as I walked up and down the meadow with Hugh's arm round my waist, and listened to his boyish talk about the future, and all we were to do and say and see in it, something more than a child's heart beat in my bosom, and the blossom of an innocent love unfolded its leaves beneath his influence.

There is nothing more beautiful than the first, fresh affection of a boy and girl who do not know what passion is, but love without envy or jealousy, or fear of loss, and simply because they cannot help loving, and nature calls them to it.

If it would but last! if it *would* but last! How often in later years have I looked back on that young love of mine, and envied its purity and singleness of heart, and wished that I had never wakened from the blissful dream in which it wrapped me!

The bright afternoon sun had long set behind the hills, and the evening had become dusk and chilly, before we remembered where we were.

"By Jove! half-past seven!" exclaimed Hugh as he looked at his watch, "and I shall be late for old Dean's supper. We'd better go home, Katie, or we shall get into a scrape."

"And then Aunt Tessie will say, perhaps, that I musn't come out in the evening again. Let us run, Hugh. It's all downhill."

"Never mind, darling, if she does scold a little. It won't be for long now, Katie, any way."

"What shall I say if she asks me anything?"

"Tell the truth. I shall see her to-morrow morning without fail. And I don't think she'll find many objections to make to *me*," added Hugh, superbly. "Good-night, my sweet little pet. Give me one more kiss before we come in sight of the garden. Now for a hoist over the wall. That's it, Mrs. Power. Good-night. God bless you." And Hugh stood kissing his hand to me in the fast-falling dusk, as I walked soberly up the garden path and tried to realize the tremendous fact that I was *an engaged woman*.

CHAPTER III.

MY FIRST LOVE-LETTER.

THERE was no light in the dingy little drawing-room, and I dared to hope that Aunt Tessie had not yet come home. But I was mistaken. As I stumbled over the fluffy mat that lay at the open window, her thin voice rang sharply on my ear, and I knew she was not in the best of tempers.

"What are you knocking over now, Katherine? You'll have that table down in another minute. Where have you been? Why are you out so late? It's nearly eight o'clock."

"You said I might go for a walk," I answered, somewhat sulkily. The change of atmosphere was too sudden for my moral constitution.

"*I said you might go for a walk, but I did not say you might stay out till after ark. It's not fit that young ladies should* go rambling about the fields by the at such an hour. It is most inde You are old enough to know better."

The injustice of the charge made prudent.

"I have not been alone," I an rashly.

"Not alone! With whom ha been?"

"Hugh Power."

"Hugh Power! that lad who is ing with the rector? And pray wh Master Power permission to walk with a niece of mine? I shall speak Dean about it. I consider it is a gr erty on his part."

"It was not a liberty," I returned "and Hugh is not *Master* Power. twenty-one last month, and has cor his property."

"*Hugh*, indeed!" cried Aunt with uplifted hands. "What next, der? I tell you, Katherine, that in such a thing would never have be mitted as for a young lady to ramb miscuously with an idle lad. But soon see a stop put to it. You ha your last walk with Master Hugh or any other master, for a long t come."

"I am not sure of that, Aunt I said defiantly, for my naturally temper had risen at the contemptuo of her voice. "I have not been doi thing wrong. *You* go to tea with t tor, whenever you feel inclined, an with him too: I met you in the High together last Tuesday—you know I d

"Well! and if so do you suppos is no difference between a lady of and a little girl like you?"

"I am not a little girl!—I'm fift and—and—*I shall be married some d* added, *sotto voce*.

"*What!*" exclaimed Aunt Tess much astonished at my audacity to sa

"I shall be married some day," I ed; "at least I suppose I shall—mo are; and—and—I don't think you o treat me like a child, Aunt Tessie, a ger!"

"You'll be married some day\

shit who has not yet left off pinafores! What on earth will you talk of next? Pray is this one of the notions *Master* Power has been putting into your head?"

"Yes, it is! and it's very unkind of you to insist upon calling him 'Master' Power, Aunt Tessie, when I tell you plainly he is twenty-one."

"Oh! he is twenty-one, is he?—and he believes that you will be married some day? Did *Mr.* Power add to the obligation by prophesying whom you would marry, *Miss* Arundel?"

The sarcastic tone in which she spoke goaded me on to say the very last thing that I should have said.

"Yes, he did! He wished me to marry him, and I promised I would; and I shall be Lady Power some day, Aunt Tessie, though you *are* so unkind about it; and then perhaps you'll be sorry you spoke as you have done now—and Hugh will be awfully angry when he hears it, for he has always thought you dreadfully ill-natured to me; and—and—I wish I was dead!" I continued, lapsing into tears, "or—or married—or gone away from all this—for you make me wretched!—you do!"

My aunt was too much amazed to answer. We had often had altercations before, and some rather stormy scenes of mutual recrimination; but that I, on whom she looked (as, indeed, who would not have done?) as a mere child, should suddenly commence to talk about being married, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for me to do, had completely taken away her breath. She sat silent, drumming on the table nearest to her with the fingers of one hand, while I continued to sob in the corner, and make my heated face look still more unseemly by the application of a not over-clean pocket-handkerchief.

Presently my aunt rose, still in dignified silence, and rang the bell.

"Light the lamp, Jane?" she said as the housemaid appeared to answer it.

The lamp was lit, and solemnly placed upon the table. I left my covert, and, with a final scrub over my blurred countenance, *attempted to slip up-stairs. But Aunt Tessie was not going to let me off like that.*

"I will thank you to resume your seat, Katherine!" she said in the iciest of voices.

I sat down again, prepared for the worst.

"Troublesome as you have been to me from the first moment you entered this house," said Aunt Tessie, "I never thought you could have so far forgotten yourself as you have done to-night. I am ashamed of you!—perfectly ashamed of you! A child of your age to talk about being married, and leaving my protection, when you are not even old enough to know how to address your elders with the respect due to their age and station in society! If these are the ideas that association with other young people of your own age puts into your head, the fewer companions you have the better. I shall never permit you to leave the house alone in future. Miss Drayton will walk out with you; and should business take me from home, you will not quit the garden. You have brought this restriction upon yourself by your evil conduct. And as for Hugh Power, I shall request Mr. Dean to order him never to speak to you again."

"But he can't order him to do anything. He is of age," I answered, in a subdued voice. I knew how young I was, and the fear of being peremptorily separated from my lover was appalling me. I was too inexperienced to consider that it would be to Aunt Tessie's interest to get rid of me as soon as possible.

"He *shall* order him! And if the young man will not listen to his tutor's commands, I presume he will to mine. Marriage, indeed! why, he must be mad to have talked of such a thing, and you to listen to him. He might just as well propose to marry your doll! But we shall soon see if we cannot settle the whole business. And now go to bed at once. No! don't kiss me! I am exceedingly offended with you, and it will be a long time before we can meet upon our usual terms."

"I wasn't going to kiss you!—I wouldn't if you asked me! But I am engaged to Hugh, and I always shall be!"

"Go up-stairs at once, miss! You ought to be ashamed of yourself to speak in that immodest manner. What has come to

young girls of the present day is past my comprehension to imagine."

And I dare say the sudden blossoming of my womanhood had taken poor Aunt Tessie by a surprise only second to my own; and that my uncouth speeches, and apparent obstinacy, occupied her mind for many hours after I had fallen asleep. As for myself, I stalked up to my bedroom, burning with indignation, and shut the door behind me with a heavy slam. I had been so utterly spoiled, in the true sense of the word, by neglect and want of affection, that the consideration my feelings had never received I was unable to bestow on those of others. I did not think for a moment of Aunt Tessie's natural surprise and displeasure at hearing me talk as though I had been a grown-up woman. I only resented the affront my new-born dignity had received, and longed to revenge myself on the person who dared to talk of my tall young lover as if he were only a schoolboy, and to ridicule the idea which had made me feel so proud.

"She *sha'n't* keep Hugh from coming to see me!" I said to myself angrily, as I slammed the door. "She's a nasty, ill-natured old thing, who can't bear anybody to be married because she's never been married herself! But I should die if I never saw Hugh again, and only went out walking with that horrid Miss Drayton!—and I *must* see him, and I *will!*"

How my childish heart beat at that moment, and mimicked the passions of older and more experienced—though perhaps not less childish—hearts! How I longed to fly to the sheltering arms of my boy-lover, and hear him tell me over again that I should wear a wedding-ring, and be "Lady Power" some day, and Aunt Tessie had no right to say anything but "Yes!" It had sounded all so plausible and so true, out in the open fields; but my comfortless bedroom looked like a prison, and I felt like a prisoner as I sat down on a cane-bottomed chair, and laid my head on the deal dressing-table, and cried as if my heart would break. Jane, the housemaid, who was a good-natured girl, coming in to turn down my bedclothes, found me in that condition.

"*Lor! Miss Katie!* what a start it gave me, coming on you in this way in the d Why, you're a-crying! Whatever's the ter? Has the old toad been a-worrying again about them lessons?"

"Oh! no, Jane! it isn't the lessor shouldn't mind them half so much; bu much worse than the lessons!" And and there I poured into Jane's eager ea whole account of the magnificent pros which had been so rudely dashed tc ground. The girl, only eighteen he fully sympathized with me, as might be pected.

"Lor, now, Miss Katie! To thin your having a beau!—and such a fine-l ing young feller into the bargain! And Harundel thinks you're too young! T rubbish! I was only fourteen when I kept company—and I've had five or s 'em since then! But what should a drie old maid like that know about it? She's r had a hoffer 'erself, *that* I bet! O Lor! Katie! it'll all come right—love-makin ways do! So don't you cry no more get to bed like a good girl, and we shall Mr. Power round here the first thing i morning."

"But she won't let him come in, J I said mournfully. "She declares she' round to the rectory and tell Mr. Dea about it, and ask him to order Hugh n see me again; and then, perhaps, he' back to Ireland, and I shall never be ried, or anything, and grow to be a h old maid, like Aunt Tessie, and—an But this prospect was too much for equanimity, and I could proceed no fur

"*You* be an old maid!" cried Jan assuringly. "Never, Miss Katie! Y much more likely to have three 'usb one after the other."

"Oh, but I never could marry any but Hugh, Jane. You can't think how and good-natured he is; and so strong! he can ride, and fish, and shoot, and —in fact he can do everything!"

"In course he can; but I mustn't chattering to you any longer, or we have the old gal coming after us. But here, Miss Katie, you write your gentl a bit of a letter, and I'll take it to hi soon as it's morning."

"A letter!" I exclaimed. The idea of writing to tell Hugh my trouble had never struck me before.

"Lor, yes, miss. Why, I writes to *my* young man as regular as ever Sunday comes round. You can scribble it with a pencil, you know—anythink will do, so you put it in an envelope—and I'll slip in and get it as we're going up to bed, and Mr. Power shall get it afore he has his breakfast."

"Oh, I will!" I said joyously, all my despair vanishing before the prospect of the new pleasure. "Thank you, dear Jane, for thinking of it. It will be delightful, and Hugh will be so pleased. And you will be quite sure to run over with it as soon as ever you're up. And mind, what you do, that Mr. Dean doesn't get hold of it."

"Why, miss," replied Jane, her rosy face lighting up with mirth at the idea, "*as if I would!* Lor, you don't know half the dodges I have to be up to, to get a sight of my young man. I *should* be a fool if I couldn't manage to keep clear of the rector or his old missis. But there's the bell. I must go. So you keep up your spirits, miss, and write your letter, and I'll fetch it as sure as the clock strikes ten."

"But I haven't had any tea," I said despondently. At fifteen, and after a long walk, the stomach plays rather a prominent part in one's organization, and even love must succumb to its importunity. It is only in the prime of life that we permit our passions to lead us blindfold, and cannot eat, or sleep, or amuse ourselves, unless they are satisfied. I loved Hugh very dearly, but I *did want my tea.*

"Lor bless me! No more you have, poor dear! But you shall have it, as my name's Jane. I believe she'd be glad to think you went to sleep on an empty stomach, though I know she's a-howling for her own tea now. Here, now, light your candle and stay quiet for a bit, and I'll be up again in half an hour."

She left the room as she spoke, and I turned my attention to writing my first love-letter. I had got an end of lead-pencil in my pocket, but I could not find a morsel of paper. *I was in despair again.* I dared not sing *or call, for fear of attracting* my aunt's attention; nor dared I delay my task, in case she should take it into her head to follow me up-stairs. Looking about to see if I could find anything with which to effect my object, my eye lit upon my gingerbread-covered Bible. In a moment I had whipped it off the mantle-shelf, and torn out its fly-leaves and title-page. I had never been taught to hold any special reverence for the book, and regarded it as I would any other volume—except that the lessons I was set to learn from it were a trifle duller and more incomprehensible to me than my ordinary tasks.

I forgot what the substance of that first love-letter of mine was, but I have no doubt I should smile to see it again now. I can vouch for its being written in a shockingly bad hand, and I dare say all the words were not correctly spelled. But I know I *felt* what I wrote, and fully believed that my gallant friend would obey the summons I sent him, and come and rescue me from the clutches of Aunt Tessie as soon as it was put into his hand. When Jane crept up-stairs with the tea and bread-and-butter she had promised me, she asked if the epistle were ready, closing the door carefully before she put the question, and speaking in a whisper even then.

"For I don't know what's come to your aunt to-night, Miss Katie; and that's the fact. But she's awfully restless and sniffing about in all directions. I expects she thinks Master Hugh is hidden away under some of the sofa-cushions."

"My note is ready, Jane, but I haven't an envelope to put it in."

"That's just what I was thinking, and so I brought you one," replied Jane, as she produced a very small and common-looking envelope from her pocket. "Now make haste and put it up, Miss Katie, for I shouldn't be surprised if she popped in upon us at any moment."

"But it won't stick, Jane," I cried despairingly.

"Won't it now! That's just like them horrid cheats of stationers. Can't I put a seal on it for you in the kitchen?"

"Let me try a little longer," I exclaimed, as I pressed the edges of the envelope together. I did not relish the idea of the co

and housemaid reading all the nonsense that I had said to Hugh.

But the delay, slight as it was, proved fatal. In another moment Jane had snatched the letter from my hand, and, looking up to inquire the reason of her haste, my eyes encountered the figure of Aunt Tessie.

"Why are you not in bed?" she said to me sternly. "And who ordered you, Jane, to bring up that tray to Miss Katherine?"

"Well, I thought, ma'am, as she had had no tea—"

"You had no business to think. What is that you have in your hand?"

"In my hand, ma'am? Oh! nothing—only a piece of old paper I picked off the floor."

"Give it me."

"No, no!" I exclaimed, forgetting myself. "You sha'n't see it. It is not for you.—Jane, you must not give it up."

At this unexpected outburst on my part, poor Jane was completely dumfounded. I had cut off every means of retreat.

"Give that note to me," repeated Aunt Tessie.

"Indeed, ma'am, its nothing—only a bit of Miss Katie's exercise-paper that was lying about."

"Do you hear what I say to you? If you refuse to obey my orders, Jane, you will quit my service to-morrow morning," said my aunt, still holding out her hand.

The housemaid looked at me imploringly, delivered up the note, burst into tears, and left the room. As for myself, I sat on the edge of the bed, sullen, revengeful, and prepared for anything.

"You have no right to read another person's letter," I said, as Aunt Tessie drew my wretched scribble from its covering.

The remark had no effect upon her. She unfolded the discolored sheets and read what was written on them through to the end. As she did so I watched her face grow still more dark and stern.

"So," she said, slowly, when she had finished, "*this* is the use you put the Holy Bible to, Miss Arundel!—to write disgraceful love-letters to a young man whose acquaintanceship I have already told you I intend you shall give up! And to lead a poor ignorant girl like Jane away from her duty by asking her to deliver them! Disobedience, immodesty, falsehood—these are the fruits of the religious training I have given you—the reward for eleven years' care, and protection, and trouble!"

I would not answer her; I was too indignant and too unhappy; but sat on my self-elected throne, kicking my feet against the iron-work of the bed.

"Are you not going to answer me, miss? What do you mean by this conduct—this deception—this ingratitude?"

"I have nothing to be grateful for," I muttered, "and I haven't deceived you, for I told you I was engaged to Hugh; and I am; and I won't give him up."

Aunt Tessie's face turned white with anger. She had neglected me so long, permitted me (for her convenience) to take so much my own way in all matters that did not come under her immediate supervision, that now, in this first battle of any consequence between us, she was thunderstruck to find how much obstinacy and boldness there were in my composition.

"Very good," she replied with tremulous anger. "Very good, Miss Katherine. Your conduct determines me how to act. I shall take this letter to Mr. Dean the first thing to-morrow morning, and beg that he will at once inclose it to Master Power's papa. Then you will see how long this kind of thing will be permitted to continue."

"It will be mean! It will be dishonorable!" I cried. "If you are dishonorable toward me, how can you expect me to be honorable toward you? I tell you what, Aunt Tessie, if you let Mr. Dean read my letter, or send it to Sir Thomas Power, I will never obey you again—that I won't; but walk with Hugh whenever I choose, and write to him as often as I like!"

"I will undertake to see you do not further misbehave yourself, Katherine," replied my aunt, with unaltered tone, as she lifted the tray of tea and bread-and-butter which poor kind-hearted Jane had smuggled up to me, and, carrying it out of the room locked the door behind her.

I heard the key turn in the lock, and leaped off my bed in impotent rage at t

nity of being made a prisoner. It was —bitterly hard, so I thought—to be ed in like a common criminal; but had Tessie left the tray behind her, I might derived a little comfort from discussing ontents. But bereft of lover, liberty, tea all at one stroke, what heroine could such accumulation of misfortune? As t Tessie's footsteps died away in the dis-e, and I realized she had no present in-on of relenting, I threw myself back my bed, and, without undressing, ed myself to sleep!

CHAPTER IV.

HUGH TO THE RESCUE.

When I waked the next morning, heated unrefreshed from sleeping in my or-ry clothes, I could not at first remember I should be as I was. But when I did ember, hope sprang up in my breast as lark springs from her watery nest with first blush of dawn. The dark pages of never look so dark in the morning as do at night; and with youth all feelings so buoyant that no trouble lasts long. So mped out of bed, and had washed and essed myself before Aunt Tessie's vir-eyes had opened on the world. I threw he casement window. No sound was to eard, either in-doors or out, except the tering of the birds, as they hopped it to find their early breakfast. What uld I do to amuse myself? A sudden ight struck me. I tried the door. No; as still fastened. My aunt, then, had repented of her harshness before she t to her own room. But I could not eve but that, as soon as she had risen, would set me at liberty again. So I sat he door to listen for the advent of my id Jane. The sun was high in the heav-before she and her fellow-servant came ping down-stairs. They went on tiptoe they should wake their mistress, for they w that they were late.

'Jane! Jane!" I said in a loud whisper *ey passed the door.* Their only answer was a prolonged "Hush!" Then, after a moment's pause, Jane put her lips to the keyhole and said:

"Don't speak now, Miss Katie, for mercy's sake! It's as much as my place is worth to answer you. But I'll come again, by-and-by. Hush!"

And with that assurance I was forced to be content.

Oh, how wearily the time went by! It seemed to be hours before Aunt Tessie left her room, which was next to mine. I heard her pause by my door, and listen to hear what was going on within, and I gave two or three loud snores to pretend that I was happily asleep. Then she passed down-stairs, and I remembered she had gone to her breakfast, and began to feel dreadfully hungry, and somewhat afraid lest my *ruse* should return on my own head by causing Aunt Tessie to reflect that, if I were unconscious, I could not possibly want anything to eat. About half an hour afterward, however, I heard her mincing step reascending the staircase, and a sudden desire to avoid her made me leap, clothes and all, into bed again, and pretend to be fast asleep. I heard her unlock the door, and, entering the room, place something on the chest of drawers.

"Breakfast!" thought I; but I would not open my eyes by so much as the width of an eyelash. My aunt walked up to the bedside, and regarded me. "Little minx!" she said spitefully; "she has the impudence to sleep through it all! It is to be hoped her breakfast won't get cold!" she added, with a sneering laugh. And then she walked all round the room to see if she could find anything, and, failing to do so (she had confiscated my Bible and bit of lead-pencil the night before), marched out again and locked the door behind her.

"Oh, no, Aunt Tessie, my breakfast sha'n't get cold! don't you be afraid!" I said to myself, as soon as she was out of hearing, as I leaped out of bed and hurried to the chest of drawers.

On it was a tray, holding a plate and a tumbler. The plate contained dry bread; the tumbler, water. The sight sent all my spirit down to zero.

"I won't bear it!" I cried passion

as I flung the piece of bread into the garden, and sent the tumbler after it. "I know she has plenty of money to keep me on—I heard the cook say so to Miss Thompson the other day; and she has never given me half enough to eat. And now, just because I have written a letter to Hugh, she wants to make me live on bread and water! But I won't! I'll starve first! and then she'll be hung for killing me—and a good job too!"

I was but a child, and I talked myself into a passion which could only find vent in tears, and make me feel more ill and hungry than I had done before.

"Miss Katie! Miss Katie!" said a voice under my door.

"Is that you, Jane? Oh! don't let her catch you!" I exclaimed, alarmed for the safety of my only friend.

"No fear of that, dear! for the old cat's off to the rectory—and if she hadn't taken the key of your door with her, I'd have had it open in a jiffy. But I daren't stay long, for she's sworn cook over to her side—only she's obliged to slip round to the green-grocer's for a cabbage. Look here, Miss Katie: have you had anything to eat?"

"Nothing, Jane! Aunt Tessie brought me some bread and water, but I threw them both out into the garden."

"I know you did, and broke her tumbler; and a nice way she is in about it! But you can't be starved, you know. So just pull this bit of string through the keyhole."

The end of a piece of stout twine made its appearance as she spoke, and I pulled it toward me.

"That's right, miss! And now go and let it down out of your window, but hold the end tight, whatever you do, for I may never get the chance to give you another."

I comprehended the kindness of her invention now, and, doing as she desired me, I soon drew up a little basket with bread and cheese in it, and some biscuits and a bottle of milk.

"Stow all them things safe away, for Heaven's sake, when you've done with 'em!" *cried the good-natured girl; "and keep the string and the basket, for I bet we shall want 'em again this evening."*

"Oh, how good you are, Jane!" I said, as I received my treasures through the open window; "and what a jolly way this is of having one's breakfast! I believe you could come up yourself if you tried: just climb that bit of apple-tree, and walk along the branches, and give a little jump. It looks quite easy, Jane, doesn't it?"

"Seeming and being are two different things," replied the girl, though she surveyed the tree carefully as she spoke. "Don't you be trying to come down that way, Miss Katie, or you'll break your neck, maybe!"

I laughed at the idea. I was too happy at that moment, eating my bread and cheese, to think about it.

"You'll let me know all that goes on, won't you, Jane?" I demanded, presently. "If you write it on a scrap of paper, I can pull it up so easily with my string!"

"Well, I ain't much of a scribe, Miss Katie, but as far as I can do it, I will. Anyways, my dear, if Miss Harundel don't let you out by this evening, cook and I will kick up a shindy about it, that you may be sure of."

But Aunt Tessie did not let me out by that evening, nor the evening after, and at last I became quite desperate. Even the companionship of Miss Drayton, or the perusal of the lesson-books I had so much contemned, would have been a relief to me; but the silence and the solitude, and the uncertainty of what was going on in the outside world, nearly drove me frantic. My aunt did it with a view to breaking the rebellious spirit I had displayed; but she went the worst way to work that she could possibly have determined on. A few kind words, an inclination to sympathize with my youthful trouble, would have brought me in tears of penitence to her feet; for mine was not an ungrateful disposition, and the intense, though unconscious, yearning for love which possessed me was probably the reason that had made me attach myself with an earnestness far beyond my years to my boy-lover. To treat me as Aunt Tessie was treating me then, was to make me turn with all the greater longing to his company and affection; to think with rapture of the pleasures and dignities he had promised me; and to

be ready, at all risks, to break away from the fetters which kept us from each other.

Jane took care, even at the peril of her situation, to keep me well supplied with food during those two weary days of imprisonment. Had Aunt Tessie had her way, she would have fed me—as indeed she imagined I was fed—on bread and water. Twice a day I heard her footsteps mount the stairs, and her hand unlock my chamber-door; then the cook would enter with the scanty fare, and set it down upon the chest of drawers, not daring even to give me a look of encouragement for fear of the jailer standing outside; for after that first morning Aunt Tessie refused to enter my room. Whether she was afraid of my reproaches, or that I should do her some bodily injury, I know not; but she held no further communication with me than was effected by her unlocking and locking the door whenever the servant entered with my food, or to perform the offices necessary in my bedroom. Jane—on account of her friendly disposition toward me—with my aunt's consent, I never saw.

But, on the evening of the second day, when the dusk had fallen, and it was thought safe to draw up the little basket, I found in it, beside the usual provisions, a candle, a box of matches, and an undirected letter. How eagerly I opened it! I thought it must be from Hugh; but I was disappointed. It came instead from Jane:

"der miss katy i wanted to git up to the rectry and see mr powr before this but she keep so sharp she wunt let us leve the hous but i hop to slip rund this evening wen shes at church and will tell him al wat as happen so keep up your sperits miss katy and maybe i shall ave a letter for you wen i cum back."

I kissed the ill-favored piece of paper again and again. This was the next best thing to having a letter from Hugh. If he could only learn how I was being treated, I was sure that, somehow, all would be right. I had the largest of faith in the prowess, skill, and courage of my young lover; and, so far, my childish discernment had not misled me.

I heard the bells ringing for evening service *(it was a Friday night)*, and knew that nothing short of an impending earthquake would prevent my aunt Tessie from going to "sit under" her favorite minister. The rector, too, must be present, and most of his pupils, Hugh Power alone, on account of his difference of faith, being exempt from attendance. What a capital opportunity! How I hoped Jane would find him at home—walking about the garden, perhaps, with his beloved pipe in his mouth, or feeding his dogs, or perhaps even writing me a letter. I sat at the window eating my tea with almost a light heart, and wondering how much Hugh had heard about me and the punishment Aunt Tessie had seen fit to put upon me. Something he must have heard, I felt convinced, or else why should he not have tried to see me during these last two days? Oh! I was so glad that Jane was going to the rectory! It would all come right now! Hugh was sure to make it right. What could I give Jane to prove how grateful I was for her kindness? As I was thinking thus, talking half to myself in the gloaming, and leaning half out of my bedroom window, till my hands could almost touch the waving boughs of the old apple-tree beneath it, I heard a hasty footstep on the grass below.

"Is that you, Jane?" I whispered cautiously.

There was no answer; but I saw a dark figure swing itself into the apple-tree, and heard the crackling of the smaller branches that gave beneath its weight as it ascended rapidly toward me.

"It *can't* be Jane!" I said to myself, and a strong hope, that was half fear, began to work within me.

"Oh, do speak!" I cried presently, as the figure commenced to crawl along the bough, that I could almost touch with my hand; "do say something! I am beginning to be frightened! Who are you?"

"I am Hugh, darling!" said the voice of my lover, as his two strong hands grasped the window-sill. "Move that table away Katie, and let me swing myself up into the room."

"Oh! can you? *may you?*" I exclaimed in some dismay at so unusual a proceeding although I moved the table as he desired me.

"I don't know whether I may."

sure I *can*," he answered as he threw one leg astride the window-sill, and drew me toward him. "And now, my poor little darling, we have no time to spare. Put on your hat as quick as you can, Katie! I have come to take you away from all this!"

CHAPTER V.

I AM REALLY MARRIED.

"To take me away, Hugh?—but where?"

"Up to my sister, Mrs. Delancy, in London. That's Juliet, the second, you know—the very jolliest girl in the world. As good-natured as can be, and awfully fond of me."

"But, Hugh, dear!"—I was speaking in a very stifled voice now, which came from somewhere close to Hugh's budding beard—"what will she say when she sees me?"

"Say! why, nothing, except that it's all right. You don't know Juliet. She'd cut off her right hand to oblige me; and when she hears that you are to be my wife—"

"O Hugh!"

"Well! didn't you promise it, Katie?"

"Of course I did!"

"And do you suppose, after that, that I will allow you to be bullied and starved as this horrid old woman is trying to bully and starve you? Not a bit of it! If you can tie up a bundle of your clothes quickly, and throw it out of window, well and good, Katie; but if not, you must come with me just as you are!"

"But, Hugh, dear, how can I? I haven't got any proper things to go to your sister's house in, and—and—I haven't got any money to pay for my journey either."

"My darling little simpleton! are you so green as to imagine I will let you pay anything for yourself? And as for the clothes, Katie, Juliet will soon get you everything you want, and then in a few days we'll be married, and off to Paris, and out of Aunt Tessie's clutches for evermore."

"O Hugh! it will be delightful, but how did you hear it all?"

"Well, old Dean was at me about it yesterday, *and because I wouldn't promise* to give you up, he telegraphed to my father, I believe, or at least he threatened to do so. So I had been thinking all to-day how I could possibly get at you, and when Jane came over to the rectory this evening I spotted her in a moment. To hear you were locked up and kept on bread and water was enough for me. I don't think I was ten minutes packing my portmanteau and sending it off to the station. And now we must be after it at once, Katie, or we shall miss the eight-o'clock train."

"And your portmanteau has really gone, Hugh?" I said, with open eyes.

"Really and truly, so I must go with it, whatever you choose to say."

"Oh, don't leave me behind!" I cried imploringly.

"As if I would! Why, what am I here for, you little goose! Are you good at climbing, Katie?"

"You know I am! Don't you remember the day I tore my muslin frock in the old crab-tree?"

"Ay! that was a black Monday. Well, I'm going to hold this big branch like that—quite steady—and you must creep along it till you reach the trunk. Do you think you can do it?"

"I am sure I can—if—*if you will shut your eyes, Hugh.*"

"All right, darling! I will keep them tight closed. But don't tumble, for Heaven's sake."

He seized the bough in his strong hands, and, with every pulse beating at the prospect of liberty, I landed myself, though, I fear, in no very elegant fashion, at that part of the trunk of the apple-tree where the branches commence to divide.

"I'm all safe!" I said, in a gleeful whisper.

"Thank God!" replied Hugh, and I don't think I had had any idea of how fond he was of me till I heard him render up that thanksgiving. "Now don't stir, darling, till I come to you. The drop is too deep for you to take alone."

He swung himself to the ground as he spoke, and, lifting me in his arms, set my feet once more on the old familiar grass-plot. He clasped my hand in his, walked

swiftly up the garden path, vaulted over the wall, then helped me to join him as he had done before.

"And now, Katie, we must run," he said, decidedly, "for if we miss this train your aunt may not give us the opportunity to catch another."

The fear of Aunt Tessie's wrath, and subsequent punishments, if she discovered the excess of my delinquency, lent me wings, and I flew by his side like a little bird. There was no breathing space for reflection on what I was doing—for speculation as to how it would all end. There was only just time to reach the station; to see Hugh elbow his way through a crowd to the booking office; to hear him inquire for his portmanteau; to be pushed into a carriage; to see Guildford Station moving off as in a dream, and to find I was all alone with my lover, and we had been delightfully naughty.

"Oh, *won't* she be in a rage," I exclaimed, as I turned my glowing cheeks toward him, "when she comes to find it out!"

"She shall never be in a rage again with you, my darling, at all events in my presence. Aunt Tessie's reign is over, until she finds another victim. It will be rather the worse for her if she interferes with *my wife*."

God bless the lad! how proudly, how firmly he said the words! Even at this distance of time I can hear his blithe young voice as he pronounced them.

The journey from Guildford to London is not a lengthy one. It was still early when we arrived in town.

"Where does your sister live?" I inquired, as Hugh and I drove off from the station in a cab.

"In Park Lane, darling; but I sha'n't take you there at once. She may have a dinner, or a ball, or Heaven knows what, and we might take her too much by surprise. We will drive first to an hotel, and when I have seen you comfortable, I'll run round to Juliet's and make it all straight for you."

I was quite willing to accede to anything he might propose—I looked on him as so very much grown up in comparison with myself. So we proceeded to the hotel and ordered dinner, at which the waiter looked surprised, but served the meal nevertheless, and waited on us during its continuance with the utmost gravity.

By the time it was concluded I was very tired and very sleepy, being oppressed by none of those doubts and fears which would have harassed a more experienced spirit, and prevented its taking rest. So Hugh put his rug over my feet and tucked me up comfortably on the sofa, and bade me go to sleep while he visited his sister Juliet. And, like a child, as I was, I did go to sleep, without even taking the trouble to dream that all my little woes were ended.

It must have been nearly eleven o'clock when Hugh returned. He entered the room noisily, threw his hat and cane upon the table, and called to the waiter from the open door to bring him a "brandy-and-soda." I was awake in a minute.

"O Hugh, dear! have you come back? Where is your sister?"

"Well, I'm rather in a fix, Katie; its an awful bore, and I had not the least idea of it, but Juliet's out of town."

"Where has she gone to?"

"The Isle of Wight, the woman says; but there's hardly any one in the house. It seems one of the servants broke out suddenly with typhoid fever, and my sister and all her children were sent off at once. It's beastly awkward, isn't it?"

"I hope none of them will catch the fever," I said, anxiously.

"I hope not. They seem to have taken precautions enough. But what am I to do with you, Katie? I can't let you go into the house, because the sick servant is there still. Its the most horrid sell, my sister being away, I ever knew in my life."

"Why can't I stay here?" I said, ingenuously.

"My innocent little darling! Well, I suppose you must; but it's not what I intended for you, Katie. However, I'll tell you what I'll do. You shall have a room here, and I'll sleep at my old quarters in Jermyn Street, and the very first thing to-morrow morning I'll go to Father Aylmer, of St. Charles Chapel, and see what he can do for us."

"Oh, but you mustn't go away, Hugh!" I cried, clinging to him. "You mustn't

leave me here alone. I shall be so dreadfully frightened."

"My own Katie, what *can* I do? I wish I knew anybody in London with whom you could stay for to-night. But as I don't, I see no alternative."

"But why need you go to another hotel? Stay in this hotel, Hugh. I shall think every moment that Aunt Tessie has found me out, if you don't. I shall dream of nothing but horrors if you leave me here alone."

"Very good, I won't leave you alone, then," he said, with a sigh. Poor boy! I think the responsibility he had undertaken began to weigh upon him even then. And I can remember that he looked very awkward as he summoned the waiter and gave the necessary orders for my reception.

"Waiter, this young lady—my sister," he added, with a kind of jerk, "will sleep here to-night. I am taking her to her friends. She has just left school," he went on, as if that circumstance could be of any consequence to the waiter.

"Very good, sir! Is the young lady's luggage down-stairs, sir?"

"No, she has left her luggage at the station. It is to be sent after her. Just tell the chambermaid to come up here and attend her to her room.—You are ready to go to bed, aren't you, Katie?" he continued, addressing me.

"Yes, Hugh!" I answered, mournfully. I had not anticipated there would be so much difficulty attendant on my being quartered for the night. As the waiter disappeared, Hugh came up and kissed me.

"Good night, darling!" he said fervently. "I wish I hadn't told those lies, Katie. I don't know what Father Aylmer will say when he hears it; but it all seemed so queer. I felt as though I must say something. It is better the people here should think you are my sister, or they may begin to talk, and that is so unpleasant."

"But they will find out it is a mistake when we are married, Hugh, won't they?"

"Oh, yes, of course; but perhaps they *won't hear of it, and if they should* it will *not matter by that time. So good*-night *nce more, dear Katie. Sleep* well, and I shall have seen Father Aylmer before we meet again,"

"What has he to do with it?" I demanded curiously.

"Why, I hope he will consent to marry us."

"Must we be married by a Roman Catholic?"

"Yes, and by a Protestant into the bargain. I wish there was only need for the one ceremony, Katie. Well, never mind. You will be my own dear little Protestant, whatever other people may say."

He kissed me again, and dismissed me to the care of the chambermaid, whose surprise at my having no night-gown, and being obliged to borrow a brush and comb, led me into the commission of half a dozen, if not more, falsehoods to account for the absence of my luggage. For I had not even staid to make up the bundle Hugh had suggested to me, so eager had been my desire to quit the scene of my imprisonment and starvation.

When the chambermaid left me, I felt terribly lonely. I had always slept by myself at Aunt Tessie's, but then the room was small and bare, and I could see into every corner of it. But the large apartment of which I had been made the temporary owner looked so much too splendid and too vast for such a mite as I was, that it frightened me, and when I hid my head under the bedclothes of the huge four-poster, I forgot that Hugh was sleeping but a few yards off, and almost wished myself back again in Ivy Cottage. But when, after much twisting and turning, I at last managed to fall asleep, my slumbers were healthy and profound. The sun was streaming through the window-blind when I awoke next morning, and some one was knocking continuously at my chamber-door.

"Who is that?" I cried impatiently. "Come in."

The chambermaid who had attended me the night before entered with a card in her hand.

"An old gentleman, miss—looks like your grandpa, I should say—wants to see you. He's a-waiting in the coffee-room, and told me to bring up this card."

I took the card in my hand, which was inscribed:

Sir Thomas Power,
Gentian's Cross,
Dublin.

The name appalled me. I forgot my *rôle.*

"Oh, it's not for me!" I said hurriedly; "it must be for the young gentleman, for Mr. Power; it's his father, I know."

"Your brother's papa, my dear! Then it must be your papa too."

"No! it isn't—at least— He didn't ask for me, did he?"

"I think so, miss; but all the waiter said was that I was to give that card to you, and say the gentleman was waiting."

"But he *can't* want me," I said, in an agony of apprehension. "I don't know him even! Oh! where *is* Mr. Power? Do take the card to him, and say his papa wants to see him."

"But I think the young gentleman's out, miss; and I am sure the old gentleman asked for you, or the waiter would never have made such a mistake. Can I help you to dress, miss? I dare say he won't mind waiting a bit."

Some vague idea that, if I did *not* make my toilet, Sir Thomas Power might insist on my being dragged before him as I was, made me accede to her request, and I hurried on my clothes as best I might. What a strange figure I must have looked when I was arrayed in them! A plain pink-and-white cotton frock, none the cleaner for having swept the branches of the apple-tree; a black apron, which in the hurry of flight I had forgotten to change; skirts that hardly covered my ankles; and unbound hair that flowed down lower than my waist—such was the appearance first presented to Sir Thomas Power by his son's elected choice. As soon as I was ready, I ran down to the sitting-room. Fear took me there so promptly. I was afraid that Sir Thomas might have come with the intention of carrying his son back to the rectory, and leaving me all alone to brave *Aunt Tessie's* anger. My *heart beat violently as I turned* the handle *of the door. But I need not* have been so frightened. Sir Thomas Power was certainly there, but so was his son. At that sight my courage returned.

"Hugh!" I cried joyfully.

"Here she is, sir," said my lover, as he took me by the hand and presented me to his father.

"That! Why, good Heavens! she is only a child!" replied Sir Thomas, as he surveyed me through his double eyeglass.

"I am fifteen," I said grandly, as I drew myself up to my full height.

"And you two want—you two *expect* to be *married!*" resumed the old gentleman sarcastically.

"We *intend* to be," replied his son, as he threw an arm protectingly around me.

"Hold hard, Hugh. Don't talk nonsense to me, or this business may not end in the way you like best. You are not in a position to say what you *intend* to do."

"I am of age," said Hugh, proudly.

"True; but this child is not of age. She is under sixteen, and you cannot marry her without the consent of her guardians unless you take a false oath to the effect that you have obtained it. Yet you steal her away from the protection of her aunt, and bring her up to town, and let her pass a night under the same roof as yourself! Now, do you understand the position in which you have placed her?"

At this question I was surprised to see Hugh's gallant head droop. He knew so much more of the world than I did that he at once comprehended the difficulty of the situation; but to my innocent ears his father's speech conveyed no other meaning but that he was angry Hugh should have brought me to an hotel.

"We did try to go to Park Lane, sir!" I exclaimed eagerly, "but Mrs. Delancy had left London. And I hope you won't be angry with Hugh, for I want to be married just as much as he does; and I asked him to take me away from Aunt Tessie. Didn't I, Hugh?"

"Have you heard of the way in which she was treated, sir, for only saying she was fond of me? How she was shut up in her room, poor child! and kept on bread and water?"

("At least, I should have been if Jane hadn't brought me things," I interpolated.)

"And how harsh Miss Arundel was to her, and always has been ever since we were first acquainted? Katie has endured a perfect purgatory with her aunt."

"No; I have heard none of these things, Hugh. How should I? You had not even confided to me the young lady's name. Had you done so, this unhappy affair might have turned out very differently. The first intelligence that reached me on the subject came in a telegram from Mr. Dean, entreating my immediate presence at Guildford. I reached there late last night, to find you and Miss Katie had already flown. I had an interview with Miss Arundel, who was naturally in a most excited state of mind, and followed you as quickly as I could. My object in doing so, Hugh, you must of course be aware, is to restore this young lady at once to her friends."

At this announcement I gave a yell, and Hugh looked terribly distressed.

"Sir!—father! I entreat you to think what you are saying. You cannot take her back—not now. It is impossible. You will make me miserable for life if you do so. Can you suppose for a moment I would have carried her off had I imagined there was any obstacle to our marriage? But I thought, since I was of age, it would be sufficient. O father! don't think of me—think of Katie! What has she done that she should suffer for it, as she will suffer if you persist in your intention?"

"And pray what do you wish me to do?" inquired Sir Thomas.

"Let us be married, sir. Father Aylmer will marry us this morning, if you will only give your consent; and I am my own master, you know, and have come into my property, and I might do much worse if I were left to myself."

The last argument seemed to carry some weight with the old gentleman. He stopped and considered.

"What will your mother say to it?" he said, after a pause.

"What should she say? Katie has no money, but I have plenty for us both; and she's a lady, and—and—we love each other," added Hugh bashfully, though his a still closely folded round me.

"Ay, ay; but there's a worse obje her than all these, and I'm sorry, more than I can tell you, that a son should have forgotten it. This you is not of the same faith as yourself, a seldom seen any happiness come from marriages."

"What's her faith got to do with for her?" said his son quickly. "make any difference in her appearanc disposition? I know she's a Protest

"But I'm not a Protestant," I posed. "Not if Aunt Tessie is one, to say."

"What are you, then, my dear manded Sir Thomas.

"Nothing, that I know of."

"That is worse than the other,' joined gravely. "But, however, Hu time we finished this discussion. If I could prevent this absurd marriage rying Miss Katie back to her aunt; consideration of her birth and the fee her family, no less than your own ch I simply place before you the disadv of the connection, and leave it to you decide whether you will marry the not."

"Of course I will! I never in doing anything else," replied Hugh. as for my mother, when she once k to be irrevocable, she'll get over enough."

"Well, well, my boy, you were self-willed, and I only trust the bless have forgotten to seek may find y nevertheless, and rest upon your w yourself. But it's a terrible risk—a risk!"

"Now, don't go and undo all t of your first wish by croaking out s mal prophecies, father. I have no f the subject whatever, and as soon have returned from our wedding tou and I will go and settle down at Lodge, like two old fogies, and beco ers of the ground for the rest of our won't we, Katie?"

"I will do anything you like, whispered in reply.

Sir Thomas Power regarded us for a few minutes in silence, then sighed deeply.

"Did you see Father Aylmer this morning, Hugh?" he demanded presently.

"Yes, sir."

"And what did he say to you?"

"He was very much surprised, of course, and he was—well, he was very angry," replied Hugh, with an effort; "but he said, as matters were, he supposed we had better be married as soon as possible."

"And cannot you perceive the disgrace of such a concession?" returned Sir Thomas.

Hugh hung his head.

"Father, don't make it worse for me than it is. I've been an awful fool—I see that. But I had no idea Juliet was out of town. Why on earth didn't she write and tell me they were going to leave? Who would have expected to find them all away in the midst of the season?"

"Your sister telegraphed to us, and begged we would communicate with you. Letters are not always safe in such a case. I hope you have not been to the house, Hugh!"

"Only for a minute, in the hall. That couldn't hurt any one. But you will acknowledge it wasn't *my* fault Katie had to come to an hotel."

"I can't acknowledge that, my boy. It's been your fault, as far as I can see, all through. The only thing left now is to remedy it as far as lies in our power. Before leaving Guildford, I obtained Miss Arundel's consent to my seeing you married as soon as I found you—should you not have been married before. As certain preliminaries are inevitable to the event, you had better come with me at once, Hugh, and we will procure what is necessary. Meanwhile, Miss Katie must remain here, and we will return and fetch her at eleven o'clock."

I had but a very unformed notion as to why they left me, and was kept in a state of miserable suspense until their return. Then, by Hugh's joyous face and whispered assurance that it was "all right," I guessed, more than knew, that I was about to be married. I was hurried, just as I was, into *a cab by Sir Thomas Power, carried off to the church, of which I remember* nothing but that it seemed to be a confused mass of light, and warmth, and color, and sweet smells, and then to another, which was blank and dreary, and made me shudder; and at both places Hugh and I knelt down and had words said over us, to which I did not listen, and which I probably should not have comprehended had I done so. Only, when we left the last church, a gold ring was on my left hand, and I understood, though very vaguely, that my name was Power.

"What do you intend to do next?" asked Sir Thomas of his son, as we stood once more within the precincts of the hotel.

"Have some lunch!" replied Hugh, who was grinning from ear to ear. "You spoiled my breakfast for me, Katie, and I must make up for it now."

"And I am so hungry, too," I ventured to reply.

"Poor child! I dare say you are, and half frightened out of your wits into the bargain. Never mind, darling! you behaved like a little brick, and it's all over now, my pet, and we've got nothing to do but enjoy ourselves."

"When I asked just now what your intentions were, Hugh," recommenced Sir Thomas, who did not appear to approve of his son's levity, "I meant, where do you wish to go, now you *are* married?"

"Oh, I don't know—Dover to-night, I suppose, and Paris to-morrow. Katie shall choose—it's all one to me."

"Oh! I should like Paris, Hugh," I interposed.

"You must get her some clothes before you leave town, you know," said his father.

"Must I? Oh, by Jove! yes, I suppose I must. Why didn't the old lady send up her things by you, sir?"

"I did not offer to take such a responsibility upon myself."

"Besides, they were all very old, Hugh. They wouldn't have been of any use now."

"Wouldn't they, indeed, ma'am? Conceited little puss! She thinks 'Mrs. Hugh Power' is going to have everything of the very best, does she? Well, she's about right there. So, just look in the paper, Katie, and give me the name of one of those female magicians who supply weddin-

fits at an hour's notice; and, as soon as I've had my lunch, I'll go off and send her up to you with a cart-load of things to choose from."

"And a box to put them in, Hugh."

"All right, darling! and a cord to put round the box. Everything shall be complete in time to catch the five-o'clock train to Dover.—You will stay and dine here, father?"

"No, Hugh. My business is ended, and the sooner I go home the better. I wish I had happier news to carry them."

"Don't be 'down' about it, sir. You've got the jolliest little daughter you ever had, and worth my six sisters all put together. Now, don't let mother make a fuss about nothing. By-the-way, I suppose my account is transferred to Coutts' by this time, and I can draw on them as I choose?"

"Yes. The transfer was made the day after you came of age. Don't be extravagant, Hugh. Remember, five hundred a year doesn't go far."

"Oh, we shall live like fighting-cocks on that down at Derry Lodge. And as for the rest—you forgive me, father—don't you?"

"I forgive you," replied Sir Thomas.

"And kiss the child," continued Hugh, as he pushed me forward.

The old man took me in his arms and embraced me kindly.

"You are my daughter now," he said, "but you are still more the wife of my son. Be a good wife, and you are sure to be a good daughter. God bless you!"

Then he turned once more to Hugh.

"God bless you, my son!" he said solemnly, and left the room.

They were the last words Hugh ever heard him say.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. AND MRS. HUGH POWER.

To imagine Hugh and me setting out upon our wedding tour is to imagine a boy and girl, just let loose from school, indulging in the wildest and maddest pranks imaginable. Marriage no more made a woman of myself than it made a man of him thought of the importance of the st had taken, of the displeasure we had of the irresponsible childhood we h behind us, or the uncertain future t before, came like a cloud to darke bright morning of our lives. It was a shine, and we reveled in it—yet not the appreciation we should have dor we passed through the storm befor But we took pleasure as a right, an not even troubled to think if it last. We giggled from morning till n eat and drank everything that was before us—ran about like a couple of tics escaped from Bedlam—were neve or sick, or out of spirits—and thought riage the most delightful thing that ha been invented. I was charmed wit articles of attire that Hugh had hastil cured for me in London; and for th week changed my dress three times just to see how I looked.

At the end of that period we w Paris, living at an hotel on the Boule and the enchantment of my new exi was at its height. Yes! at its height. soon was all this brightness quenched relentless Fate that was even then st on us with noiseless steps! When been in Paris a few days, I received a from my aunt Tessie, inclosing a h pounds to buy my trousseau. It was stern and offended letter, naturally, a sinuated a great deal more than it said. she forwarded a check for the amount had been put on one side to provi wedding outfit, and did not say th would have nothing more to do with

"*Had* you waited," wrote Aunt with many dashes, "as the religiou moral training you have received fr would have led *any one* to conclud *would* have waited, until you had atta *decent* and *respectable* age to be mar should have been able to present yo *twice* this sum; but as you have chose trary to all reasonable expectation, to d yourself and me by a *clandestine ma* and at a time of life when you ought in *the nursery*, all I can do is to se what is your own, and to trust you w

good a use of it as your *inexperience* and *utter ignorance* of shopping will permit you."

How we laughed at the letter, and how contemptuously we picked up the poor little check that fluttered out of it. For Sir Thomas had presented Hugh with a note for three hundred before they parted to defray the expenses of his wedding tour.

"Give me the check, Katie, and I'll get it changed for you. It will do to pay for all the fripperies you may set your affections on while here," cried light-hearted Hugh. "Well, the old girl's letter is not so bad after all, is it, darling? We *have* been a couple of scamps, there's no doubt of it; but they'll hardly try and reform us now, eh, Katie? What's this Aunt Tessie says?—that you ought to be in 'the nursery!' Write and tell her you admire her good sense, and that you will be, long before herself."

"Oh! I wish I dared! What a rage she'd be in!"

"But you'll never be afraid of her again, Katie."

"Hardly, while you are with me. Hughie! I shall go and call upon her in grand state when we go back, and leave my card!"

"You little ape! I fancy your sailing into that tiny room with a long train skirt, and sweeping up all the little mats after you."

"And sitting on the sofa in lemon-kid gloves, with my hands crossed on my lap—so! And talking to Aunt Tessie in the politest of tones. 'I hope I see you well, Miss Arundel. The weather is very warm, is it not? Remarkably so for England! But you would have been quite astonished if you could have felt the heat while Mr. Power and I were in Paris.'"

And I strutted about the room, and bowed, and gave myself airs and graces, till Hugh screamed with laughter.

"Katie! you'll kill me! Oh! I'd give worlds to see your first interview with Aunt Tessie! It will be as good as a play."

"You *shall* see it, darling. Do you suppose I'd go without you?" I said, as I came up to him and cuddled the curly brown head he laid *against my childish shoulder.*

"Tell me," I continued earnestly, "do I look so very, *very young?*"

"You don't look *old*, pet" he answered.

"Of course not! Do you wish me to be a shriveled-up old creature, with fishy eyes and a wrinkly neck, like Aunt Tessie or Mrs. Dean?"

"Heaven forbid!" he cried involuntarily.

"Well, then, listen! I know I'm not, but don't I look—well, not *quite*, perhaps, but a little like a woman? When I have my train skirts on, you know, and a bonnet, would people think I am only fifteen then?"

"I don't know, Katie," said Hugh dubiously; "I'm almost afraid that they do. When we were coming out of the Madeleine yesterday, I missed you, and the *cicerone*, seeing me look about, informed me that '*mademoiselle ma sœur*' had gone down the steps, and that he did not think '*la petite*' enjoyed seeing the church as much as I did."

"The old wretch! He must be as blind as a bat! or else he meant to be impudent. Why, Hughie, I had my hair turned up too! Oh! this is not to be borne. I will never wear a glove on my left hand again, if I am to be insulted like this."

My husband took the marvelous left hand, on the thin, unformed fingers of which my rings rattled up and down and jostled one another in his, and looked at it earnestly.

"It will be a very pretty little hand by-and-by," he remarked, "when it has had time to grow plump and dimpled."

"You rude boy! not to think it is pretty now. Well, whatever it is like, it is yours, and you'll have to keep it forever, and ever, and ever! won't you?"

"Perhaps," he said quietly. "And where shall we go this morning, Katie? To Notre-Dame, or—"

"Oh, not to any more churches!" I said quickly. "I *am* so sick of them!"

The slightest of all slight shades passed over Hugh's bright, boyish face. He was devoted to his own religion, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to see the various relics, pictures, statues, and carvings which turn the Catholic churches abroad into galleries of art. He did not mind my saying I had seen enough of them, though what he minded was the tone in which I said it.

"We will go to the Louvre instead, then darling," he said, cheerfully; "or to

Musée; or we will take a carriage and drive out to the Bois. Which shall it be?"

"I want to go by steamer to St.-Cloud. There is a fair there to-day, the *garçon* says; and they sell such lovely gingerbread with almonds in it! Do come to St.-Cloud, Hughie, and buy gingerbread!"

"I will go anywhere you like, Katie. But you are sure you won't be too much tired, darling? There is the theatre to-night, remember."

"*Tired*, Hugh!—as if I was ever tired! I'd like to go to a concert before the theatre and a dance afterward, if I could do such a thing."

"You dissipated girl! I shall take you back to England such a rake that Aunt Tessie won't know you. Well, put on your hat, if you mean going; for St.-Cloud will be a whole day's work."

I ran up-stairs to do as he requested me. At the head of them I nearly overturned two English ladies.

"Who's that child?" I heard one say to the other.

"Child! Why, she's a married woman."

"Impossible! She looks like a schoolgirl."

These words interested me so much that when I had gained the second flight of stairs I hung over the banisters to listen to the rest of their conversation.

"Nevertheless, she is a Mrs. Power. Her husband is the son of Sir Thomas Power, of Gentian's Cross. Maurice pointed him out to me yesterday at the *table d'hôte*. A handsome young fellow, but quite a boy. What a sin it is to let children like that make fools of themselves!"

"Ah, poor things! they don't know what's before them," sighed the other lady.

"The girl's rather pretty, I think—at least she will be by-and-by; but *he* is undeniably good-looking."

"I should like to see him."

"Hush! here he comes!" and from my perch I could watch Hugh rushing up-stairs, two steps at a time, until his encounter with *my friends compelled him to* moderate his *pace.*

"Hollo, Katie!" he exclaimed, as he passed them, and came in sight of me.

"*Mr. Power!*" I answered, with the utmost dignity of which my shrill voice was capable, "at what time have you ordered the carriage for to-night?"

Hugh stared at me with unmitigated astonishment; but I placed my finger on my lips, to prevent his speaking.

"You would greatly oblige me," I continued, in a languid tone, "if you would let me know what your arrangements are for to-day, that I may prevent, if possible, their interfering with mine."

My husband still continued staring at me, with his large blue eyes full of mirth, and I heard the two ladies on the landing move away with a sound that seemed to me like stifled laughter.

"It is too bad!" I exclaimed, hotly, as Hugh and I entered the bedroom. "Those abominable women were ridiculing us for being married so young—as if everybody wouldn't be old, if they only lived long enough. And I was determined to show them that, however young I may *look*, I know as much as other married ladies."

Hugh laughed till he could laugh no longer.

"Oh, my dear child! you are *too* funny," he said at last. "I couldn't imagine what you were strutting and pluming yourself on the top of the landing for; but I see it now. I was awfully impressed, and I am sure they must have been too. No one could have mistaken you for a real married woman. '*Mr. Power! you would greatly oblige me*' —O Katie, Katie! what a queer little mortal you are to spend all one's days with!"

"Hughie, you do not understand. If I once let these people think I am only a child, they will never treat me with proper respect. And for your own sake—" I said, grandly.

"For my own sake, I never want you to be anything but Katie," he answered, with his sweet, frank smile, as he drew me on his knee and kissed me.

That day at St.-Cloud was a very happy one. It stands out among my memories of the past in colors that never fade. First of all there was the river steamboat, with its motley group of passengers, to amuse me; then the varied and curious scenes presented

banks; lastly, St.-Cloud, with its surroundings, its beautiful summer and the long line of booths, set out ʼery kind of gay-colored rubbish, cal- to catch the eye of inexperience. I about from one place to another, de- with everything I saw. I pulled he contents of each booth, and bought rticles than I could possibly carry. I upon Hugh letting me ride on one absurdly-painted animals — horses, griffins, crocodiles, and what not— ɔnt round and round in a ring to the of the band. I purchased enough read to make me ill for a month. I ed over the palace grounds, and over ace itself (it being a day of admit- until I had really exhausted the re- of St.-Cloud, and began to think that t be advisable to return to Paris and ɔome dinner, before we set off again theatre. And through all the heat noil of that sultry afternoon, my boy- l followed me patiently about, carry- worthless purchases, never thwart- ingle desire I expressed, and waiting as if I had been a queen; while I, ɔless and selfish, never once consid- hether *he* was enjoying himself or t followed my own inclination in all and imagined, since *I* was happy, ɔuld not possibly be otherwise. Yet, ʼere going back to Paris in the boat, sat by my side while I gabbled on of I had seen, I did remark that his an- ʼere fewer and more curt than they ıve been. I turned and looked at His handsome face was toward the ɜun. Perhaps it was that light which m look so pale.

ıve you a headache, Hughie?"

ı, darling."

ıat's the matter with you?"

m only feeling a little tired."

ıw funny! I am not tired a bit."

ur legs have got less to carry," he ughingly, as he wrapped a shawl ıe.

ın't coddle me up!" I cried, impa- throwing it off.

ı *will take cold, Katie. It grows the river after the sun has set.*"

"It is not chilly now—it is as hot as fire! Why, Hugh, *you* must feel cold. You are actually shivering."

"I feel the change, certainly; but perhaps it is only sitting still. I will take a few turns to wake myself up."

He began to walk up and down the deck as he spoke, and I watched him, and thought how tall, and strong, and brave, he looked among the people on the steamboat, and felt my silly little heart throb with pride as I did so. But he certainly looked paler than usual.

We reached the hotel just in time for dinner. I was so hungry after my river excursion that I did full justice to the meal, and do not remember remarking if Hugh eat or not; but I know he drank a good deal, for I remonstrated with him for opening a second bottle of claret, and whisperingly asked him what he thought Aunt Tessie would say of his extravagance. When he rose from the *table d'hôte* I ran up-stairs to prepare for the theatre; but I had not been in my room more than a few minutes when Hugh walked in and stood by the mantelpiece, with his head upon his hand.

"Katie, darling," he commenced.

"Well, dear?"

"Do you want particularly to go to this theatre?"

"Oh, particularly! It's the last night of the piece, you know. You told me so yourself. Besides, it will be so jolly. But why do you ask?"

"It's nothing of consequence; only I've a little headache."

"O Hughie, what a bore! You must have got it from the sun. Can't you take anything to make it better?"

"I don't know. It doesn't signify."

"But you won't enjoy the theatre if you are in pain; and I *can't* enjoy a thing if you don't. Oh, do cure it before we go, Hughie."

"My own little darling, I will, if I can," he answered, taking my hand.

"How hot your hand is! You feel quite baked. Have some eau-de-Cologne, Hugh."

He took the eau-de-Cologne, and poured it on his head.

"Are you better now?" I asked, anxiously.

"A little. And so you very much-

to go to the theatre, Katie? Well, we *will* go. I'll get a 'pick-me-up' down-stairs, and wait for you in the vestibule."

He turned, and left me to finish my dressing, and I—selfish little mortal!—without more than a passing regret, put on my cloak and gloves, and joined him as he had desired me. As we drove away from the hotel I placed my hand in his.

"Your head *is* better, isn't it, Hughie?"

"Much better, dear. There's nothing like a brandy-and-soda to set one up. I feel quite clear again, now."

He smiled as he spoke, and I was reassured. The play was a long and popular one; the house was crowded, and brilliantly lighted with gas; the atmosphere was oppressively hot. Hugh and I sat side by side in the stalls. I could not understand a word of the piece; but my liking for dramatic representations amounted to a passion, and I kept my eyes riveted to the stage, and followed the actions of each performer with the keenest interest. I spoke to my husband two or three times on first entering the theatre, and he answered me in his own good-natured way. But I saw that it was an effort to him to talk, and so, after a while, I ceased to question him.

"I am sure your head aches still," I whispered, "so I sha'n't bother you any more, dear boy."

He smiled and nodded, and I returned to my own thoughts and occupations. Presently some one touched me on the shoulder. I started, and turned. It was an old gentleman from behind, who was standing, bowing, and pointing to something. Several other people were leaning forward with anxious countenances. I looked in the direction of their eyes. There, in the stall by my side, with his face turned upward to the glaring gas, lay my husband—fainted!

CHAPTER VII.

CLOUDING OVER.

Any one would have been frightened. Any woman with a full knowledge of illness and all its symptoms would have been frightened to find a hale young man, o whom she had never thought but as in th fullness of life and vigor, suddenly lying un conscious beside her. As for myself, m alarm amounted to absolute terror. I coul only think that Hugh was dead, and m shrill scream rang through the theatre. Hal the people in the stalls rose to their feet The women gathered round me, and al chattered together in their attempts to sooth my fear; the men got hold of Hugh some how, and lifted him out into the corridor where they loosened his cravat and waist coat, and threw cold water on his face, and opened a window to give him air. The ladies would have held me from his side, and kept on assuring me that *monsieur mon frère* would recover much sooner if left to the charge of the gentlemen; and though from my unfamiliarity with their language I could not understand one-half of their rapid conversation, I contrived to hear those words, and to answer them with the indignant assertion, "*C'est mon mari.*" At which the French ladies, wondering much and talking more, fell back and let me go to Hugh, by whose side I knelt, crying as if my heart would break. But he did not move nor show the least sign of consciousness; neither the cold water nor air had any effect on him—he lay like a beautiful statue, white and rigid. After a while some gentlemen who had left the corridor returned with another stranger, who I could see by his appearance was a doctor. He placed his hand on Hugh's heart, felt his pulse and turned up his eyelids with his thumb. Then in a moment, as it seemed to me, my husband's coat was stripped off, his arm bared, and the blood was spouting from it in a dark-red stream; I screamed, and hid my eyes. The doctor spoke to me, but I was too frightened and nervous to be able to comprehend what he said; then he spoke of me to the by-standers, and shrugged his shoulders at their reply. Lastly, he lifted me gently away from Hugh's prostrate figure, and placed me at a little distance from him, where I knelt with clasped hands and bated breath waiting—I hardly knew for what.

But after a few minutes my husban

opened his eyes and tried to rise. They pushed him back into a recumbent posture.

"Hughie!" I exclaimed, in my new-born delight.

"Katie!" he murmured, feeling for me in the air with his hand. "Where am I? Have I been ill?"

"Oh! you have been so dreadfully ill, darling!"

"How stupid of me! Let us get home."

The doctor turned to me, and in broken English inquired where we lived, and I told him. He supported Hugh down to a cab, and drove back to the hotel with us. The ladies and gentlemen loitering up and down the vestibule were very much surprised to see our disorderly arrival, and crowded round with expressions of sympathy and offers of assistance. But Hugh turned from them all to me.

"Don't let us be bothered by strangers, Katie. If this gentleman will be good enough to give me his arm up the stairs, I want no one but you. I shall be all right again to-morrow."

The doctor saw him safely into bed, felt his pulse, gave him a draught of some kind, and left, saying he would call again in the morning. As soon as he had closed the door, I crept up to Hughie's side, and laid my inflamed face upon the pillow.

"Why, my little Katie, how you have been crying!" he said, in a languid tone. "I'm not worth all this fuss, dear—"

"O Hughie! How can you say so, when you are so ill, and I have been so terribly frightened!"

"It's only a headache. It'll be gone in the morning. I can't think what the deuce made me faint, though! I suppose it is the malaria of this town. Paris is awfully unhealthy at this season."

"Let us go away, then! Let us go to the seaside, or some nice country place. I shall die if you go on being ill."

"My darling child, what nonsense you are talking! I shall be as right as a trivet in a few hours. I suppose I've been overdoing it lately—but it's very queer. I never fainted in my life before."

"*And it was such a dreadful faint*, too! and the man took such lots of blood from your arm. It made me so sick."

"Poor little dear! It is rather hard upon you I should have knocked up so soon. But a good sleep is all I want; and I feel rather sleepy now."

"Do go to sleep, darling! and I'll undress and come to bed, too."

"You mustn't do that, Katie. The doctor said you had better lie in the dressing-room to-night. I may be restless and disturb you."

"I won't sleep in the dressing-room! You may want something in the night."

"If so, I will call. Do—dear—Katie to—oblige—me."

He was getting so drowsy he could hardly frame his sentences, so I let him drop off to sleep, with his hand clasped in mine; but I would not stir from his side, and there I sat, occasionally slumbering with my head upon the counterpane, until the morning dawned and the hotel was alive again. Hugh was still sleeping, though his hand had slipped from mine. I got up quietly and changed my dress, and wondered at what time I should order breakfast, or if he would have his in bed. I had not been able to decide when the *fille* knocked at the door with our hot water. She brought a message, also. *Monsieur le médecin* was below, and wished to see my husband. "What on earth," I thought, "could he have come so early for? it was so stupid of him to disturb Hugh before he had had his breakfast;" still I said he might come up, because I did not know what excuse to give for refusing to admit him. He came in grave and subdued, examined his patient's sleeping countenance, then followed me into the dressing-room.

"Has madame any friends in Paris?" he asked.

"None, sir, except Hugh. We were only married a fortnight ago."

He looked still more grave.

"All madame's friends, then, are in England?"

"Yes."

"Would it not be as well to let them know that monsieur is ill? Madame is very young to be left alone with him."

"But, sir, he is not going to be ill, is he

He says it is only a headache—that it will be all right after he has slept."

"Monsieur may feel better when he awakes, but it is possible the illness may continue for a few days. In that case, would it not be better madame had some one with her to help in nursing?"

"But Hughie would not let anybody but me nurse him, monsieur. I am sure he would not! And all our friends live so far away. It would not be worth while to bring them over for so short a time."

He shrugged his shoulders again.

"Madame must do as she thinks best. Sleep is certainly the best remedy monsieur can have, but he has a considerable amount of fever about him, and will require watching for a few days. I will look in again at noon."

I sat down, rather confounded and very unhappy at the doctor's remarks. He evidently did not think Hugh would be well to-day, or even to-morrow. We should have to put off our visits to the Louvre and Musée, and the excursion we had planned to Chantilly. How very tiresome! But I hardly believed Hugh could put them off. He hated being coddled. He would determine to go all the same, and the fresh air and the amusement would do him more good than all the medicine in the world.

I could not touch the coffee and rolls that the *fille* brought to my room for me, so anxious was I that Hugh should wake and assure me personally that he was better. At eleven he opened his eyes and spoke. I flew to his side, but the first look I cast on him convinced me that the doctor was right. He would certainly not be able to get out to-day.

"How do you feel, Hughie?" I commenced.

"Rather queer still, dear. I feel so heavy, and my limbs ache as if I had been beaten. What o'clock is it?"

"Eleven. What will you have for breakfast?"

"I—don't want—any—breakfast," he answered, as his head sank back upon the pillow and his eyes reclosed,

"Hugh! Hugh! are you going to sleep *again?" I exclaimed, seeing all my hopes of a pleasant day vanish.*

"Can't—help it—so—sleepy," he murmured indistinctly, as he relapsed into unconsciousness.

I went into the next room and had a good cry. I was not half so much frightened at this juncture as disappointed. Here was I, a mere child in years, in a public hotel among complete strangers; and my only companion, on whom I relied for protection and amusement, and help and everything, asleep like a log in bed! What a dull, dreadful day lay before me! What was I to do without Hugh? How could I take a walk or my meals, or even interpret what others said, by myself? In my ignorance, I was almost ready to be angry with my poor darling for not making an effort on my behalf, and getting up to look after me. How little I thought that his last effort upon earth had been made! I cannot dwell on this portion of my story; it is too monotonous, and, even at this distance of time, it is too painful. The doctor came again, and again, and again, perhaps for three or four days, before I was awakened to more than a sense of impatience and inconvenience, and a lurking idea that French doctors were fools, and that an Englishman would have cured his patient in half the time. Which opinion I confided to Hugh, and Hugh smiled at languidly, but did not dispute, and said it was deuced strange that such a rubbishy illness as his should last so long. But about the fourth day, even my inexperienced eyes could see that he was worse. He had been neither asleep nor awake all night, but tossed about restlessly, and talked nonsense, at which I had sometimes laughed because I thought he was joking, and sometimes cried because I could not understand what he said, and he would not repeat it. I had risen and dressed myself before the doctor called. To my surprise, he was not alone. A lady accompanied him. She was without bonnet or shawl, and I recognized her as one of the two women who had met me on the stairs some days before (how long ago it seemed!) and laughed at the idea of my being married.

"I have brought a friend, madame," said the doctor.

"Dear Mrs. Power, let me be of use to you if I can," said the stranger, coming forward and taking my hand.

I was too ignorant to know how to accept the offer graciously.

"It is very kind of you," I stammered; "but I do not understand." The eyes I turned toward her were red with weeping; and as she saw them, she kissed me.

"I have come to try and help you," she answered. "Your husband is ill, and you should have a nurse for him. Let me get you a Sœur de Charité. The doctor says it is necessary."

"But he will soon be well again now?" I said, with an inquiring glance into her kind face. The look I met there made me hide mine upon her bosom and burst into tears.

"My poor child!" she whispered.

"Oh, don't say he is very ill!" I sobbed. "He has been in bed for four days—surely, that is long enough! Why doesn't the doctor let us go away? If we went to the sea, I think Hughie would be all right again."

"He is not well enough to move yet, though we hope he soon will be. Meanwhile he must be nursed, and the nursing is too much for you alone. It is not fit you should undertake it longer. And so we have got a proper nurse for Mr. Power, and she is waiting outside."

She called out, "*Entrez, ma sœur!*" As she spoke, a fair, placid-faced woman, dressed in conventual garments, entered at once, and, after a slight salutation to me, passed into the adjoining room. I felt the hope I had cherished, that this illness of Hughie's might prove to be nothing, die out of me as I watched her solemn transit; at the same time a burden fell off my childish shoulders, to know that I was no longer responsible for the heavy duty I had undertaken.

My new friend, who was seated, drew me down upon her lap—actually upon *her lap—I*, a married woman, but a very sorrowful one—and caressed me as though we had known each other all our lives.

"And now, dear, you mustn't think me impertinent, but is not your husband's father Sir Thomas Power, of Gentian's Cross, Dublin?"

"Yes."

"*And have you written to tell him of his son's illness?*"

"No—not yet."

"Then you should do so at once."

"Oh! do you think that he is so *very ill*, then?"

"I think that in any case his father has a right to know that he is not well—and his mother, too. What anxiety she may be suffering from his silence!"

"His mother is angry with us. She has never written to him since our marriage. Because we ran away, you know—though we didn't mean it—and Sir Thomas came to town and saw us married; and Lady Power is angry with him as well as us, Hughie says."

"That makes it all the more necessary you should write to them at once. You will write to-day—won't you, dear?"

"Yes—if you'll tell me what to say," I added ingenuously.

Mrs. Grahame, as my new acquaintance was called, proved a friend indeed to me. She not only told me "what to say" to Hugh's parents, but staid with me during the day whenever I was freed from my husband's bedroom.

That evening my dear boy seemed better; that is, his head was clear; he was in no pain, and he spoke to me at intervals.

"Katie dear, there is one thing weighs on my mind."

"What is it, Hughie?"

"Not hearing from my mother. I wonder she doesn't write. Do you think she can be angry still?"

"It's a great shame if she is!" I answered stoutly. "Your father is very kind. I wrote to him to-day."

"To tell him I am ill?"

"Yes. Mrs. Grahame said I had better."

He did not express any surprise or make any comment. He took it as a matter of course.

"I am glad you have written. Perhaps she will send me a message now, Katie. I do so wish we had never run away!"

"O Hugh! are you tired of me?" I said, in alarm.

"My darling, no! I love you more than ever I did. I was a silly boy when I took you away from Guildford, Katie. I have been a man ever since you have been left

my protection. But it is that makes me see clearer what is right and what is wrong; and to marry as we did was very, *very* wrong."

"I am so sorry that I went!" I sobbed.

"It wasn't your fault, darling! How should it have been?—a trot like you, six years younger than myself! I should have taught you better. But it is over now, and we wouldn't undo it if we could. We have been very happy, Katie."

"Oh! *so* happy, Hugh! Everything was so jolly till you fell sick."

"And no one was happier than myself. So, you see, dear Katie, it isn't the *thing* I regret, but the way we did it. I know my father was angry, though he didn't say so. And my mother, too—she has been a good mother, though rather strict, and she was always very proud of me. I am her only son, you know, Katie."

"Yes, dear!"

"And perhaps she thinks I don't care for her any longer, since I was so bent on having my own way. Don't let her think that, Katie. I should be so sorry if she did. And it isn't true.

"Don't bother yourself about it, Hughie. I dare say she will write to you—and, if not, you can write to her."

"You shall write from my dictation. And there is another thing, darling: I must see a priest."

"A priest, Hughie! What for?"

"Oh! for a dozen things. But you don't understand, my poor child! Only I have asked the doctor to send one to me; so don't be surprised when you see him."

"But what do you want to tell him?"

"I want him to pray for me," said Hugh solemnly.

To pray for him! The words fell on my careless ears with little import. If they bore any, it was such as to make me feel glad that Hugh was so anxious to get up again as I was to see him, and to hope—though why I could not have said—that the prayers he was desirous of obtaining might *have some miraculous* effect in making him *do so. "For I know the Roman* Catholics *an do wonderful miracles," I said,* in my *preme ignorance, to myself.*

The priest came that same evening. He was an old, silver-haired man of a very calm and benignant expression of countenance. He shut the door when he went in to talk with Hugh, and I remained in the dressing-room outside. As he emerged again, and looked at me compassionately, I caught at his cassock

"Can you do it?" I exclaimed, in my broken French.

"Do what, my child?" he answered.

"Will he soon be well again?" I said, putting my thought into another form.

"Pray to your Father in heaven, my child! With God all things are possible," he replied, as he laid his hand upon my head and left the room.

"*Pray to my Father in heaven!*" I had no more idea of going to God as to a sentient, present Being, able and willing to listen to each word I said, and to read the inmost wishes of my heart, than I had of asking a favor of my earthly father, dead and removed from my sight. God, to me, was Some One over the description of whom I had wearied heart and brain in the Church Catechism—because of whom I was compelled to sit through two uninteresting hours in church every Sunday—to whom I had been taught I should have to render up an account of every idle word I said; and of whom, in consequence, knowing the long list of frailties that I was responsible for, I never thought except with an undefined terror.

No! I had much more notion of praying to the priest or the doctor to make Hugh well again. I rose in the morning and went to bed at night without so much as a word of entreaty to any one else!

I do not think I was much surprised, a few days later, when Mrs. Grahame came to tell me that Sir Thomas Power had arrived at the hotel. Sister Angéline had taken my place in so matter-of-fact a manner at the patient's side, the doctor and the priest came and went so regularly, that I had almost grown accustomed to Hugh lying in bed, and ceased to imagine each evening that the next morning would see him on his feet again. But though one thing seemed to have glided into the other so imperceptibly

that I did not perceive much change in myself, Sir Thomas noticed it directly.

"My poor little girl," he said, concernedly, as soon as he had seen his son, "how you must have suffered!"

"Have I, sir?" (I was terribly shy with my father-in-law, more than ever now that Hugh was unable to protect me.) "But I cannot bear that Hughie should be ill and obliged to take such horrid medicine! And I have not been out walking since he has been in bed."

"That is very wrong. They ought to have sent you out. You might have taken the fever from him."

"What fever?"

"Have they not told you that my poor boy is suffering from an attack of typhoid fever?"

"Not—*not* the fever the servant di—" I paused, unable to complete the sentence.

"Yes," said my father-in-law gravely, "it is the same. He must have taken it when he went to his sister's house."

"But he was only there for a few minutes."

"True; but there is no knowing how these things happen. God's will be done!"

"And he went for *me*—he went for *me!*" I exclaimed with a shrill scream, as I fell forward with my face upon my hands.

Is there any moment when we pass from boys to men, from girls to women? If so, that moment came for me then. Like a flash of lightning, all I had gained rushed on my mind. I saw myself, a child, in possession of a woman's privileges, of a man's love, protection, and devotion!

Like a flash of lightning, too, came, for the first time, the fear, the awful fear, that I might lose it all. I seized my father-in-law's hand and wept over it bitterly. He drew me to his side, and whispered words of comfort.

"We must *hope*, Katie," he said kindly.

"Oh! there is no hope! He will *never* get well; he will die like the servant. I see it all now. Oh, my boy! Oh, my poor, poor boy! Oh, sir! let me go to him! Let me catch it and *die too!* How can I stay *here without him?*"

"*Hush, child! hush!* You must calm yourself. You must be quiet, or you will disturb him. And as for our lives, Katie, they are in God's hands."

"I do not care, sir! I do not know what you are saying. If Hughie dies I must die too. I must go with him; I will not stay alone!" and, breaking from his hold, I rushed through the door, and flung myself, sobbing, on my husband's pillow.

"So they have told you, darling?" he said quietly. "My poor little one! It is very soon to leave you."

"*How* can you talk so calmly? Don't you care to leave me? Oh, my boy! my boy! don't you *care* to stay?"

"I did—two days ago," he answered; "but now, Katie, I'm sure it's for the best. We love each other so, and we have been so short a time together. God *must* have some wise purpose in separating us. Perhaps if we had lived together on earth, we should not have lived together above; and that's the only life worth caring about, Katie."

I could not answer him; I could not cry; the tears had dried up; the wish for inquiry had gone. No one had told me in so many words, but I *knew now* Hugh was dying. This few days' lying in bed—he had been ill, perhaps, for ten days or a fortnight—and which I had never dreamed of but as resulting in a renewal of health and strength, meant that terrible unknown thing—Death!

No! Hugh might tell it me, and I might say I know it; but I did not know it; I did not believe it; I could not realize that in a short time I and my boyish husband would be separated in this world forever! He had grown much thinner; his hair was matted and damp, his lips dry, his eyes dark and sunken; but still, there he lay, able to look at me, and speak, and smile. He could not be dying; it was impossible. So my heart said; but in reality I sat down like a crushing thing, dazed and confounded, only seeing the present in a kind of troubled dream, and tremblingly awaiting what was to come. I could not collect my thoughts, the shock had been too great for me. I could not even look back on the past, and read it clearly by the light of the present. All was blurred and indistinct. I did n walk or speak, or eat, in my proper per

I seemed to be borne along on the resistless tide of events, helpless, aimless, and but half conscious. Only I remember Mrs. Grahame's burst of tears when she met me that afternoon, and how I cried with her in a stupid kind of way, and was not quite sure if I was very unhappy about it, and felt the same as other people would feel, or whether I was a phenomenon who didn't feel at all, or an idiot who couldn't understand.

That evening some very solemn service was gone through in Hugh's bedroom, at which the priest, and doctor, and Sister Angéline, and Sir Thomas assisted. I was present at the ceremony, though I could not join in it; but my husband would not let go his clasp of me, and I pressed my lips on his hands all the time, and hid my eyes, and did not see what they were doing. But when the room was clear again, and I looked up, I saw Hugh's face laid back upon the pillows, looking very weary, but very calm and peaceful.

"Do you want anything?" I whispered.

"No, darling, I am quite content.—Father!"

"My son!"

"My love to mother. Say I was very sorry, and I was forgiven."

"She will know it, Hugh."

"And tell her to be a mother to Katie. She will, won't she?"

The father's reply was dubious. "I hope so. *I* will be a *father* to her, Hugh!"

"Thanks! I am feeling it so much—just now."

"You must not feel it; you must feel nothing but peace and happiness after what you have experienced. Don't let it trouble you, Hugh; all will be right. Trust in God."

"I do. I have no anxiety for myself; but for her—for her."

"For me, do you mean, darling?" I inquired curiously.

Hugh, with a great effort, raised his arms and let them fall heavily around me.

"Oh, my love! my love! my love!" he said yearningly. It was all the bitterness *of death* gathered up in one cry. Our courtship and our marriage, both, had been so much like play that we had never seemed to have occasion to use strong language toward one another. The vehement words that are wrung from the heart by the knowledge of past loss, or the anticipation of coming evil, had been as yet unnecessary to express the simple, satisfied affection between Hugh and me. But in the moment of our parting, I have often thought since that his eyes were opened to see what lay before me, and his love reached its climax, and he would have given worlds to be able to remain and shield me from it. But I was still earth-bound; I heard his anguished cry of warning, but I did not understand.

"Dear, dear boy, don't look like that!" I said weepingly.

He drew his hand leadenly across his face. There were tears standing in those once strong eyes.

"Do you remember that day, Katie, in the wood behind Aunt Tessie's cottage, when we found out first we cared for one another? Do you remember the May-blossom, and how you laughed at me for loving it? Don't forget the May, Katie. You will love it now for my sake. And poor Aunt Tessie! we used to laugh at her, too. Give her my love. Don't let her think I had any unfriendly feeling left."

"No, no, dear!"

"I will sleep now, darling; but don't you go away. I shall wake directly if you let go my hand.—Good-night, father."

"Good-night, Hugh!" replied Sir Thomas, in trembling voice.

"And won't you say good-night to me, Hughie?" I said wistfully.

"No, darling! never good-night or good-by to you. Here—or *there*—always one—*one!*"

He closed his eyes and they wanted me to leave him; but no inducement could make me let go of the hand which Hugh had placed in mine. So I remained for an hour or so, until my eyes, too, closed and my head fell forward on the coverlet. Who lifted me up and conveyed me to another room, I do not know; but when I woke it was broad daylight, and I was in a strange apartment. I opened my eyes with a start, conscious of surrounding evil. The first object they fell on was the figure of Mrs. Grahame, dressed and seated despondently by the window.

"Mrs. Grahame!" I exclaimed, "why am I here? Where is Hughie? Let me go to him!"

"Hush, dear Mrs. Power! Pray be quiet!" she said earnestly, as she advanced to my side. "You shall go directly, but not just yet."

"Why not? Is he asleep?"

She nodded her head. Something in the silence of her reply startled me.

"Why cannot I go? Why did they bring me here? O Mrs. Grahame! is he worse?"

"Katie! dear Katie! I must tell you; but try and be strong? You know that he was very ill—that he was dangerously ill—that the doctor did not think he could recover—"

"Yes, yes; but why cannot I go to him?"

"Because—O my God! how am I to tell you? He is *gone*, darling—he is *gone!*"

"*Gone!* Where?"

"To heaven, Katie!"

"*Dead?*" I said; "*dead?*"

"Yes, dear; indeed he is! Oh! it is a terrible grief for you to bear!—so young as you are, too, and so lately married—poor dear child! But it's God's will, Katie!—you mustn't forget that; and we have no right to dispute anything He does; and—"

"*Dead!*" I repeated monotonously; "*dead!*"

"Katie! don't look like that! You knew he was dying; they told you so. It is very awful!—we cannot tell why God should choose to ordain it; but you know it is what happens every day in this miserable life, and the only thing we wretched mortals can do is to submit."

"*Dead!*—Hugh! *dead!*"

Mrs. Grahame became alarmed. She sat down on the bed, and shook me gently.

"Wake up, Katie! Don't go on saying that; you frighten me! Listen to me! He *is* dead. He became unconscious very soon after you fell asleep last night, and he never recovered himself. If he had we would have called you. But at three o'clock this morning he died without a struggle—scarcely a sigh. It is a great mercy he felt no pain, Katie; and he was quite content to go. Try to think of it in that light, dear, and don't *rebel against the will of Heaven.*"

But I could not think of it in that light. I turned my face round and buried it in my pillow, and cried as if my heart was broken.

CHAPTER VIII.

DARKNESS.

I DON'T want to exaggerate my feelings at this crisis, and therefore I will say as little about them as I need. I was but a child; and I have proved by later and more bitter experience that a child cannot feel grief as a woman can. I had not the capacity to comprehend love. I had not the capacity to comprehend death. I had not the capacity to comprehend what the lonely future might hold for me, nor to shrink from the evils it would probably entail. I cried for Hugh as for a beloved playmate, who might never again take my hand and lead me joyously through the flowery paths we had lately trod together. I did not weep for him as a woman weeps for the loss of her protector, her counselor, and her friend, without whom she is but half a creature, and not at all a woman. Of what account did I hold protection and counsel? What I wanted was Hugh's smile and kiss; what I lamented was the blighted prospect of our happy lives at Derry Lodge; what I was scared at was the silence, the uncertainty, the darkness that followed my boy-husband's death.

It was utterly dark to me. I could as little comprehend why I should be bereft of my life-long companion as why the world went round, or day succeeded night. I only felt that it was incomprehensible, and that I was left *alone.*

I did not realize even that until after the funeral was over, and they had taken away my gallant young lover in that long, long coffin beside which I had spent so many days, and hidden him from my sight.

Then my violent grief, which had expended itself beside Hugh's corpse, turned to a dangerous apathy.

I cannot remember myself what I did during the time that he remained with us; but they told me afterward that I sat, day and night, by the side of his body,

to it, crying over it, and entreating it to speak to me again.

I dare say I must have presented a very pitiful little spectacle—a widow of fifteen, weeping over my husband's bier—and drawn many a tear from eyes that would not have found one to spare for me in later years, when my woman's heart was pierced through and through as with a two-edged sword. Women who for the most part bring their troubles on themselves—or at least are old enough to have foreseen and prevented them—are generally left to draw on their self-pity for consolation. A sentimental grief is far oftener sympathized with than a practical one: for the sentiment appeals to ourselves, and we weep as much for what we might have been as for what others are. Not but that my grief for Hugh was genuine. I dearly loved and admired my young husband. I love his memory to this day; and often think how bright, had he been spared, my life had been. But mingled with my personal sorrow was a very present sense of disappointment. With Hugh I had lost position and protection. I did not feel any more like a married woman; I had returned to the smallness of Katie Arundel. I was not quite sure whether I should not have to take back my former name, and resume short frocks and black alpaca aprons.

And this fearful idea was heightened on the sad evening after my Hugh's funeral, when I was sitting, tearless and sullen, in my own room, and my father-in-law came in to speak to me. Mrs. Grahame had stuck a widow's cap on my poor little head, but it looked too ridiculous. I almost laughed myself when I saw it in the glass; and when I pulled it off, and all my hair down with it, I think my friends decided that natural veil was a fitter one for me than white crape.

"Katie," said Sir Thomas gently, "would you not like to go home?"

"*Home?*" I echoed vaguely; "where is home?"

"I have been thinking much on this subject," returned my father-in-law, "and the conclusion I have arrived at is, that you could not do better—at all events, for the present—than go to your aunt, Miss Arundel."

"*Back to Aunt Tessie!*" I [illegible]med, in real alarm. "Oh! I could not! I could not!"

"But, my dear—"

"She was so unkind to me," I went on, hurriedly; "and she would be so cross! And I didn't mind when Hughie was here; but now—now—"

"My dear girl, you do not seem to remember that your position is altogether altered. You have always taken, I imagine, a rather exaggerated view of Miss Arundel's strictness; but, were it all you fear, she would hardly dare to exercise it in your behalf now. You are a married woman, and will have your separate allowance. My poor son's income was not very large at present, although"—with a deep sigh—"he would have come into a fine fortune by-and-by; but it will be ample for all your wants; and though he has died intestate, I am sure that neither Lady Power nor myself would ever dream of disputing your right to what he leaves behind him."

All this was Greek to me, except the one proposition, that I should return to Aunt Tessie's care. The prospect seemed to double my grief.

"I cannot go back to Guildford!" I sobbed. "I would ever so much rather go back with you."

Sir Thomas looked uncomfortable.

"I wish I *could* take you back with me, my child. As my poor son's widow, you have a strong claim on me; but there are circumstances. Your marriage was not quite regular, you know, my dear; and Lady Power's affection for Hugh was so great, I fear it may take a little time to overcome her prejudices regarding it. Only a little time, perhaps, and then I hope you will come and see us all, and make great friends with the mother and sisters of our poor boy. Meanwhile," continued my father-in-law, finding I made no reply, "as you are far too young to live by yourself, I do not think you could do better than accept your aunt's invitation to Guildford."

"Her invitation!"

"Yes. I have written to her more than once lately, and this morning I received this letter from her in reply. After alluding to the sad circumstances of the last week, she

says: 'I am quite ready to receive my niece, Mrs. Hugh Power, if she should think fit to return for a while to Ivy Cottage, which place, indeed, had I had my will, she should never have left; and I have no doubt we shall make arrangements on meeting which will prove mutually satisfactory. Pray give Katherine my love, and offer her my condolences on this mournful occasion. How truly do the occurrences of each day convince us of the truth of the words of the Psalmist, "All flesh is grass!" I trust that late events may be blessed to the souls of my niece, yourself, and all your family—' I need read you no more," said Sir Thomas, folding up the letter (I don't think he liked the allusion to his soul any more than I did); "but my advice decidedly is, that you go to Miss Arundel."

"I don't care where I go," I said dejectedly.

So it was arranged for me that, until I was old enough, or had had time enough to look around me and decide what course of action would most conduce to my own comfort, I should return to Aunt Tessie. It was a glorious day in July when Sir Thomas took me to her house. I had parted stolidly with my kind friend Mrs. Grahame, and had been unable to shed a tear even on Hugh's last resting-place, so utterly forlorn, desolate, and rebellious did I feel. It is not to be wondered at, then, that I walked up the garden-path and into the little old familiar sitting-room of Ivy Cottage in a condition which was simply apathetic. I felt like a child that has been dancing with her companions in the broad sunshine and among the flowers all day, and suddenly finds herself plunged into cold and darkness, without one hand to guide or stay her. I was purely *in despair*.

Aunt Tessie, dressed in black, came to receive us. I did not even remark the difference in her mode of addressing me as I sank down silently upon the rickety little sofa she had so often warned me not to ruin by sitting on. Sir Thomas Power and she talked for some time together at the window in a kind of burring, buzzing way, and then the former rose to go, and advanced to bid me farewell.

"Keep up your spirits, my dear!" he said, in parting. "You are very young, and your life is all before you. There are brighter days, please God, in store; meanwhile, try and place your trust in Him. Remember how Hugh trusted. It was his great comfort at the last. I wish you thought more of such things, my dear. It is our only consolation in a time like this. May God bless and keep you! I shall expect to hear often how you are getting on."

He kissed me gravely on the forehead and left the room. When he was gone, the last link I held to Hugh seemed to be disunited. Excepting that I wore a black dress and a wedding-ring, possessed five hundred pounds a year, and was called "Mrs. Power" (all of which things I held at that moment of no account), in what was I altered for the better from Kate Arundel, who had thought it such a grand thing to run away from Ivy Cottage and get rid of Aunt Tessie's lectures, and tiresome Miss Drayton's lessons—and be a married woman? And now I was not quite sure whether Miss Drayton and the German grammar would not reappear with the morning light, or Aunt Tessie inform me it was nine o'clock, and order me at once to bed. And there would be no dear, gallant Hugh this time to come to the rescue, and turn my terror to delight. O Hugh! Hugh! was it possible I had left him lying, all by himself beneath the earth, in Père la Chaise?

How cruel—how cold-hearted I had been! I felt as if I could have jumped up from my seat and rushed back to Paris, only to sit by that lonely grave and assure its occupant that he should never be forgotten! The narrow walls and low ceilings of Ivy Cottage seemed to close round and stifle me! I wanted air—I wanted space, in which to call on my dead husband to come back to me. Overcome by feeling and choking with emotion, I rose to rush into the garden and recover myself, and fell in a dead faint over the threshold instead. So Aunt Tessie found me when she came back from seeing Sir Thomas safely to the fly which had brought us from the station.

So, she and her maids together lifted me into my lonely bed, which I did not leave for three long weeks after.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

I WAS not ill; so far as I can remember no signs of physical weakness attacked me; but I lay in bed like a deaf and dumb creature, too unwilling, too inert, too utterly crushed to move. The shock had completely stunned me. I was rendered actually incapable of taking any part in the affairs of daily life. When I had lain so for the better part of a fortnight, Aunt Tessie became alarmed. I was no longer in the position of a child, to be shaken, and pulled out of bed, and set on my feet, and ordered to eat my breakfast; and an invalid guest was not only annoying to her, but threatened to become a nuisance. So she trotted off to Dr. Carlisle, who had known me from a baby, and carried me safely through the measles and whooping-cough and other childish ailments, and brought him to my bedside; but I turned my face to the wall, and hid my eyes, and would not even look at him.

"Will you be good enough to leave Miss Katie and me alone, Miss Arundel?" he said, in the old familiar manner. "I think I shall be better able to judge of her condition when I have had a few minutes' private conversation with her."

Aunt Tessie did not like being turned out of the room—I could *feel* that, though I didn't see her; but I heard her walk to the door with a rapid step and close it sharply. Then I prepared myself for a lecture, but none came. I might have remembered what a good friend Dr. Carlisle had ever been to me—how many packets of sugar-plums he had surreptitiously given me—how many rosy apples and purple and golden plums. I waited—a little sulkily, I am afraid—for his opening words in vain. The first movement he made toward me was to place his hand gently upon my pulse.

"I am not ill," I said, jerking it away.

"My poor child!" was all he answered. At the sympathetic tones my breast commenced to heave.

Aunt Tessie had not said one unkind *word to me since I had entered* the house; on the contrary, she had gone out of her way to attend upon my wants; but she had never pitied me nor alluded to the cause of my grief. She seemed to be afraid of doing so—as though it were too horrible a subject to be mentioned—a ghost to be laid and put away and forgotten as soon as possible. And all the time I was brooding—not on Hugh in heaven, but on Hugh, dead, stark, and stiff, with closed eyes and mouldering features, buried six feet below the ground, with heavy clods of clay weighing down his boyish breast.

"Oh, I wish I were dead!" I exclaimed, as the old doctor's words brought the welcome tears into my eyes, and I turned and wept upon my pillow.

"I know you do, Katie. I know that life appears completely empty and void to you at present; that you wonder why God ever let you be born—why He ever let you meet your husband—why He can be so cruel as to sit up in heaven and never listen to what His children say, nor see what they are doing, nor care if they are miserable or happy."

"Who told you so?" I inquired, in astonishment at his having read my thoughts so well.

"My own experience, Katie—my own life. You think, poor child! that no one ever suffered as you are suffering now—that no one ever experienced so bitter a loss—that no one's hopes were ever cut short so cruelly and quickly as yours have been. That is natural, and I do not wish to depreciate your trouble. God knows it is heavy enough for such young shoulders to bear; but others have borne it before you, my dear."

"He was so good—so bright—so happy," I sobbed. "I can never forget—*never!*"

"No one wishes you to do so, Katie. It would be ungrateful in the extreme if you were to."

"But Aunt Tessie says I ought to get up and exert myself. And what is there to get up for?"

"Well, Miss Arundel has handed you over to me, you see. I am your doctor now, and I say you may lie in bed as long as you like."

"I shall never get up again, then. I shall stay here till I die."

Dr. Carlisle did not dispute the point. He only felt my pulse again, and asked to look at my tongue.

"You are not going to send me any medicine!" I exclaimed, in alarm.

"No, indeed. You do not require any. But I shall send you some books, Katie."

"I don't care to read."

"Is there any one you would like to see?"

"No one, except—"

"Except who?"

"Jane," I answered, tearfully. "She was so kind to us, poor thing! And Aunt Tessie sent her away for it. But I am sure, if she is anywhere near, she would be very—very—sorry for me—*now*."

"I will inquire for her at once," said Dr. Carlisle, rising. "I think you ought to have a maid to attend on you; and Jane was a good girl, and would do admirably. I will speak to your aunt on the subject as I go down-stairs."

And so the dear old man left me, not altogether pleased at the idea of being encouraged to lie in bed, and quite unconscious that he had adopted that plan as the best means of making me long to leave it. It was not many days before Jane arrived, and the meeting between us—on my side, at least—was an affecting one. The sight of her round, honest face brought back so vividly the night I climbed down the apple-tree to run off to London with my Hugh.

"O Jane! Jane!" I cried, as I threw myself impulsively into her arms. The girl looked frightened, and as though she were doing something wrong. She could not reconcile the little "Miss Katie" she had helped to an elopement with the widowed mistress she was now called upon to attend.

"Lor, ma'am! pray don't," she commenced. "Whatever would Miss Harundel think? She would say 'twas a horful liberty on my part. And now as you're Mrs. Power, too!"

"Oh! don't call me ma'am, nor Mrs. Power, Jane. I cannot bear it."

"Lor, miss—ma'am, I mean. And whatever am I to call you, then?"

"Call me 'Miss Katie,' as you used to do. The other name reminds me so of—of *him!*" I added, faintly.

"Oh, lor! my poor, poor dear!" cried Jane unaffectedly, as the tears rushed into her eyes; and she caught me to her honest bosom and hugged me as if she had been my mother. Her presence and rough, outspoken sympathy did me more good than anything. It was not long before she had coaxed me out of bed; and, in a few days more, when Dr. Carlisle called, he found me sitting in a chair, under the old apple-tree, staring vacantly at the summer insects that flitted through the blades of grass at my feet. He did not congratulate me upon the change. He only advised me, should I feel tired, to go back to bed.

"I hate bed," I said, impetuously. "I'm sick to death of it. I feel as if I could never go there again, even to sleep."

"Very good. Sleep where you are, then."

"What! in the garden! I should catch my death of cold, doctor."

"I dare say you would. Only please yourself, and you'll please me. Have you read the book I sent you?"

"A little of it."

"And you don't care for it?"

"Not much."

"Have you got any needlework to do?"

I shook my head. There was a pair of slippers I had commenced to embroider in Paris, lying in one of my boxes up-stairs. The very thought of needlework brought a lump into my throat.

"And do you mean to sit all your life long with your hands folded before you like this, Katie?"

"Perhaps it won't be long, doctor."

"I think it will, child. I think it will last long enough for you to thank God he did not take it away now."

"I don't believe that."

"I am *sure* of it."

"What do you mean?" I said, quickly.

"Just what I say. You do not credit me now; but before a year is over your head you will understand why God keeps you in health and strength when you want to die, and you will say it has been for the best. We all come to acknowledge that sooner or later."

His words were Greek to me. I could not answer them, but I pondered on the

afterward in a kind of dull and incomprehensive way, wondering, yet greatly doubting, if it were possible they could ever come true.

I think they were all very good to me in those days—Aunt Tessie included. It had been agreed—I fancy between my father-in-law and her—that she should receive two hundred pounds a year from my income while I remained at Ivy Cottage, and she spared no pains, in consequence, to make me comfortable. I was never worried to attend meals or prayers, to receive visitors, or to walk out with my aunt. Jane, who had developed into the most faithful and tender of nurses, waited on me like a child—carrying my dinner at all sorts of odd times into the garden or the fields, following me about as I roved listlessly from one place to another, ready to listen to all I had to say, or to bear with my many humors without giving me a word in reply. If it had not been for this friend and Dr. Carlisle, I hardly know what would have become of me. As soon as I had recovered from the debilitation consequent on my keeping my bed for so many weeks, I used to leave the garden and wander up into the wood and the fields where Hugh and I raced together, where he had first told me of his love. The hawthorn-trees, which had been like gigantic wedding bouquets on the last eventful day we saw them, had long since scattered their snow-white blossoms on the ground, and the palest of pink tinges had commenced to streak the green berries with which they were laden instead. I used to think as I looked at them that Hugh's happiness and mine had been as short-lived as their flowers; and sit down where we had sat together, and rock myself backward and forward, and wish I were buried with him and the May-blossoms. And yet it was so seldom that I cried. Jane was quite alarmed at an exhibition of tearless grief in one so young.

"I wish you'd cry oftener, my dear," she used to say, as we sat in the wood together, I generally sitting in her lap; "it isn't natural you should go on like this day after day. It'll do you harm, Miss Katie, if you don't take care. Come, dear, tell me all about *poor Master Hugh, and how* quiet he died like, and see if you can't make the t come down a bit; for it frightens m death to see you go on like this."

But I could not weep as I should l wept, even when she enlarged on the be and perfections of my lost darling. I c not stretch out my arms any more, and plore him to return, as I had done w kneeling beside his corpse. I could not alize that he lived anywhere. To me he dead, dead! and I was a forlorn crea who longed to die, too, if only to lose re lection, but for whom nobody cared enc to bestow the gift of death upon. My tinued depression began to act upon body; I felt really ill. It was now the m of September. The summer had been l and oppressive, and the languor of the se seemed to have communicated itself to limbs. I became heavy and inert; my petite failed, and other symptoms warned I was not in my usual health. Aunt Te and Dr. Carlisle had one or two lengthy versations shut up in the drawing-room gether; and I perceived that the former begun to watch me at odd moments w she thought I was not observing her, an treat me with a deference and considera I had never met with at her hands bef The change secretly flattered me. I belie it to be due to my failing health, and that Carlisle had at last been obliged to con that I was on the road to follow Hugh. pictured to myself the gradual steps by wl I should descend to the tomb, and the in esting manner in which I should fade a from this world, and be laid out, like a martyr, with my hands crossed upon breast, and be quoted forever thereafte a model of constancy and love. My g was not the less real because I indulged these absurd fantasies; but my imag tion was becoming rapidly morbid and eased from the unnatural strain laid o so that I was incapable of distinguishing tween false sentiment and true. But Comforter was on His way to me.

It was on a certain day in October th fainted. I had been out walking by my —for Jane was occupied on some work me in-doors—and feeling much the sam usual, when I suddenly became consci

that I was lying on the grass-plot, and somebody was dashing cold water in my face, and making me very wet and uncomfortable.

"Don't do that!" I said fractiously, as I feebly fought with the officious though well-meaning hand.

"She's a-coming to now, ma'am," cried Jane's voice; and then I opened my eyes and saw where I lay, and that Aunt Tessie had just got another tumbler of water ready to throw at me.

"Let me get up!" I exclaimed, struggling to my feet.

They supported me to the drawing-room sofa, for I was very weak and giddy, and pulled down the green blinds, and sent for Dr. Carlisle, who presently appeared and took a chair beside me with a most important and professional air. I felt too ill to squabble with him, so for once I let him feel my pulse without remonstrance. We were quite alone.

"Well," said the doctor, after a little while, "and so you've been taking too long a walk?"

"I only went to the wood."

"Did you feel ill before this came on?"

"Not worse than usual."

"You must be more careful in future."

"But I don't want to get well. Dear doctor, do tell me the truth! *Am I not dying?*"

The chuckle with which the doctor received my earnest question rather offended me.

"My dear child, what nonsense! You are no more dying than I am, and not half so much."

"But I want to die. Oh, I *do* want to die so *very, very much!*" I said in a voice of despair.

Dr. Carlisle grew grave directly.

"Katie," he said presently, "I have wanted to speak to you for some time, and this gives me an excellent opportunity of doing so. I have something to tell you that, if I am not very much mistaken, will make you want to live instead of die."

"*Make me want to live?*" I repeated incredulously.

"Just so, because you have something to live for. Do you know why you feel ill?"

"No, I don't know, and I don't care," I answered indifferently.

"My dear, if your greatest wish could be granted you now, what would it be?"

I writhed at the question. It seemed so cruel of him to put it.

"O doctor! why do you ask me? You must know."

"But I wish to hear it, Katie."

"Hugh! Hugh!" I moaned, as I buried my face in the sofa-cushion. "Oh, if I could but see Hugh again!"

"Well, Katie, you know that while you are in this world that is impossible. God has seen fit to call Hugh home to himself. But if Hugh, from that home, could send you a messenger to say he loved you still—a messenger to assure you of God's care for and interest in you—a messenger to comfort and console you for your loss—to give you new happiness, new hope—"

The dear old man's voice faltered, and he drew his hand across his eyes. I lifted mine from their shelter, and stared at him wonderingly.

"But how?" I exclaimed. "How?"

"Some one is coming to you, Katie, by-and-by, to remind you of Hugh; some one to whom you can talk of Hugh; some one whom you must try to bring up to meet Hugh with you in heaven."

"*Some one!*" I repeated vaguely, without an inkling of the truth. I think Dr. Carlisle found my innocence a stumbling-block to his eloquence, from the round-about way in which he went to deliver his news.

"Yes. Don't you think you must have been a great comfort to your mother when you were born, Katie?"

"I don't know. No one ever told me; and papa and mamma died so soon afterward, I can't even remember them."

"But, supposing your father only had died, and your mother had come home to England with you, cannot you imagine how fond she would have been of you, and what a pleasure and comfort you would have been to her; how you would have consoled her for the loss of her husband?"

"Perhaps so; but she died with him, you see, and left me alone. I seem to be

been alone all my life, Dr. Carlisle, till—till—Hugh came—and now—"

"Now God designs you to be alone no longer, Katie. He is going to send you a great comforter; He is going to send you a baby."

"*A baby!*"

At first I said no more than that. The room seemed to swim round with me. The very idea made me gasp with surprise.

"Yes, my dear, it is really true. You are going to have a baby, all for your own, Katie, to love and comfort you—a little baby to remind you of Hugh."

"Me!—*me!* Oh, no, doctor! it's a mistake! You don't know anything about it. It *can't* be true! It's only the hot weather; I shall be well again when the winter comes. Besides—besides—"

I was choking with the emotion his intelligence had called up in me.

"Katie! trust me! I would not deceive you! If you will be good and patient, all will come to pass as I say. But you must take care of your health, now, my dear; not for yourself, but for the sake of your child."

The words seemed to transform me. I sat up on the sofa and looked straight before me, with my childish hands pressed against my forehead, as if that would help me to comprehend the mighty fact. *My child!* a child of my own—my very, *very* own—for me to nurse, and love, and look after, and carry out for a walk! A baby in long clothes, like those mysterious and beautiful little darlings in white cashmere cloaks and satin hoods I had sometimes stopped to look at in the street, and gazed at reverently, as at something the existence of which I could not comprehend! A fat, chubby baby, in a straw hat and a perambulator, that I could wheel into the fields, to fill its hands with buttercups and daisies, and guide its toddling feet across the grass! A little boy in knickerbockers and jacket, with a smiling face and curly hair! A young man, taller than myself, a second Hugh, to whom I might cling, and confide all I had suffered, with impunity! All these wonderful phases of my coming honors flashed through my mind like lightning and made me glow with the greatest *pride a woman ever feels.* But only for a moment; one thought of Hugh made all the bright pictures of the future melt into darkness, and left a forlorn and inexperienced girl alone with her great sorrow, and half terrified at the prospect which had suddenly opened before her.

"Oh! if Hugh were only with me!" I sobbed as I flung myself again upon the sofa.

CHAPTER X.

MY OWN CHILD!

As soon as my mind had become accustomed to the wonderful idea that had been presented to it, I began to derive no small consolation from the increase of importance which the fact of my coming honor gave me in that little household. It is true that my new-blown dignity received a slight check on finding that everybody had been told the secret before myself; but that fact could not, after all, really detract from my superiority to the rest of the inmates of Ivy Cottage. Indeed, I may say that I felt myself to be raised by my new position, not only above Aunt Tessie and the servants, but almost every one in Guildford. I took to extending my walks into the village and along the high-road, that I might see all the old maids (among whom the intelligence had run like wildfire) rush to their windows to watch me as I passed, and have old Mrs. Dean (who, though she was married for the second time, had never had a family) trot down to meet me at her garden gate, and press me to walk into the rectory and seat myself, and have a glass of wine. Yes, I am fain to confess these trifles pleased me, as did the solicitude with which Aunt Tessie placed a cushion behind my back, or Jane thrust a stool beneath my feet; and I think, even had I been much older than fifteen years and a half, I should have found comfort in them still. They lifted me from the forlorn and insignificant condition in which Hugh's death had left me to a position of importance and responsibility, and for the first time I began to feel a little comforted at my loss. As soon, I suppose, as An-

Tessie could make up her original mind to broach a subject of such questionable delicacy, she acquainted Sir Thomas and Lady Power of the prospect before me; for about Christmas time, to my great surprise, I received a letter from my mother-in-law, congratulating me on the approaching event, and rather demanding than asking me to journey as soon as possible to Ireland, that my child might be born where its father had been, at Gentian's Cross.

This was the first communication of any kind that had passed between Lady Power and myself. I had loved her son, and married him, and mourned him, and not a word of sympathy, or kindness, or consolation had his mother vouchsafed to me throughout my trouble or my joy. Aunt Tessie, who anticipated the prospect of a nursery in Ivy Cottage with anything but satisfaction, thought I was foolish and impolitic to disregard the invitation extended to me; but I was spirited, though I was young, and I tore the letter which contained it into pieces.

"I *won't* go to her," I exclaimed indignantly. "She let my poor darling die without a word to say she had forgiven him. I don't care how she behaves to me, but I can't forget her behavior to him. And he was so good about it, too—he spoke so kindly of her to the very last. Why, I should die at Gentian's Cross. The very thought of her makes me mad!"

"My dear Katharine, why speak so unguardedly?" replied Aunt Tessie, who did not consider that marriage or misery had improved me much in this respect. "Of course you are at liberty to do as you like in the matter; but I should have considered the advantages of becoming friendly with your late husband's family to be considerable. In the first place, they are very affluent, and may prove of great benefit to you in the future; and in the second, if they extend their protection to—to—" Here Aunt Tessie, at a loss for a word which would express her meaning without violating her modesty, coughed and hesitated.

"To my baby," I interposed bluntly.

"Well, my dear, that is what I *did* mean; though, I suppose, it is hardly the custom to talk of—at least I have seldom heard a lady express herself so openly on the subject as you do. Still—"

"Oh, I know what you would say, Aunt Tessie—that if I go to Gentian's Cross to be confined, the Powers may take a fancy to my child, and leave it something in their will."

"Katharine, pray do not speak so loud. The door is open."

"I don't care if it is. I won't go to Ireland. I don't want their horrid money. Hugh's gone, and I've got nothing left, and —*they sha'n't have my baby!*" I exclaimed, with a face red with indignation.

"My dear, you have only to say so—though I confess I think it's a great pity. These rooms are very small; and there is no doubt you would have every comfort under Lady Power's roof. From all I hear, Gentian's Cross must be a fine place. And their only son, too! It's very natural they should wish it. No one knows a mother's feelings."

"Then why didn't she show them when they would have done some good? Why didn't she send Hugh a word of comfort when he was dying? What do I want with her feelings now? They can't bring *him* back—and she may keep them to herself. I *won't* go to Gentian's Cross!"

And so I returned not a particularly grateful letter, I imagine, though, at this distance of time, I cannot remember how it was worded, and hoped, as I posted it, that I should never again hear from Lady Power. But I was mistaken. In a few weeks arrived an answer, expressing her disappointment at my determination, but accompanied by a box of the most beautiful baby-linen that I had ever seen. My heart would have been harder than it was if it had not melted under this peace-offering laid at the shrine of Hugh's baby. I turned over the delicate little shirts, and bed-gowns, and petticoats, all trimmed with the costliest lace—the fine flannels, embroidered by hand—the rich robes and caps, the white cloak and hood, the tiny socks—and could not help feeling that some great expectations must be cherished of the infant for which such an expensive wardrobe had been provided. My heart beat faster and my eyes filled as

thought how soon I should be dressing *my own child* in these fairy garments, and I lifted the little things as reverently to my lips as though they had already touched that mysterious being of whom I thought by night and day. I could not but answer Lady Power's second epistle in a kinder strain, while I thanked her for her remembrance of me. But there was one sentence in her letter which I did not comment on, because I could not understand it. She wrote: "There are two articles you will not find among the *layette*, the christening robe and cap. Those I must, *of course*, reserve until we meet." Why "*of course?*" Her words intimated that, if my baby was not to be born at Gentian's Cross, they would at least like to see it christened there. That was only natural; but why "*of course?*" If I preferred that Mr. Dean should baptize it in the parish church of Guildford, what was there to prevent me? However, I did not worry myself about the question, but passed it over; for, as is customary with young mothers, I oftener feared that I should die in my coming trial than live to see my child grow up and flourish. Any happiness I might experience in the prospect of it only came by fits and starts. It seemed too terrible an ordeal to survive, and my fear was at times overwhelming. I brooded over it day after day, till my depression was almost habitual, and, haunting me even in sleep, would cause me to start up three or four times a night, shrieking for help, and trembling from head to foot with a horror which I could only feel and not interpret. Had I had any one on whom to lean in this extremity, I should have borne myself, perhaps, with greater dignity and trust; but more than ever did I now feel myself to be alone. Had Hugh's dear, joyous voice been able to whisper assurance to me, however ignorantly, I should have believed and rested on his word. Had I possessed a mother to take me in her arms, and tell me that the joy of the possession of myself had outweighed all her pain, I might have taken heart from her example, and learned to put my confidence in Heaven; but I had no one to speak to on the subject but such as were *even less wise than myself.* Aunt Tessie considered it excessively improper that an one should allude to such a thing as a bab until it had been dressed in Christian attir and laid in a *bassinette;* and Jane, with th horror of the uneducated of physical pai and the wonderful capacity they have f dilating on the terrors of a situation, so au mented my vague fears whenever I me tioned the matter to her, that my own sens small as it was, pointed out the advisabil of keeping my thoughts to myself. So dragged out the w days alone, and sprir drew nearer and nearer; and if I ever pra ed, it was—not for protection and safet and a happy future with my child—but th I might die before it ever saw the light. *was* so frightened!

. . . . . .

It was the dawn of one of the earlie days of March when I lay in my bed so wea and exhausted that I felt as if I were sinkin through the mattresses and the floor, right right away into infinity. Everything abou me seemed as though I were in a dream The voices of the persons who moved abou my room sounded far off, as if heard throug a fog; and yet I could distinguish each wor they said, and watch, in of indistinc and hazy manner, the gray dawn that strug gled through the white window-blinds, an fought with the sickly light of the candl which Dr. Carlisle seemed to be carrying a over the room in the most aimless way. could trace the unusual disorder of the apar ment, and I could see that the faces whic had been so anxiously peering into mine f the last twelve hours had settled down in something like their normal expression agai I knew, too, that my trial was over, a that I had passed through the gates of h into the calm of heaven; but I was too mi guid to think of anything else. I felt as my weakened senses were gradually fadi away into unconsciousness; and all I desire was to be allowed so to fade away, and nev er be troubled with pain or pleasure or a emotion more. Even a loud and energe squall from the other end of the room d not arouse me.

"A fine child," said the doctor.

"Very fine, sir," responded the nur who had been torturing me for twenty

hours past with wise saws, questionable jokes, and worrying attentions, until I had begun to regard her as an emissary of the Fiend himself—"I don't know as ever I see a finer. She's a regular beauty, she is; and such lungs, too!"

These words, accompanied by another prolonged squall, made me feel a little curious. Some of the few pleasant anticipations had ventured to indulge in flickered back upon my memory.

"Doctor," I said, faintly.

"Hush, my dear; you mustn't talk," was the immediate answer, as Dr. Carlisle came up to my bedside, and felt my pulse. "So—so! We are getting on. But you must lie still, like a good girl, and go to sleep."

"But my baby—"

"Oh, the baby's all right. A nice, healthy little girl! Now you know everything's all over, and so you must just shut your eyes, and think of nothing but having a good rest."

But the squalling was still going on (I believe they had put the baby on the top of the chest of drawers, to keep it out of the way), and something quite new, and that I had never experienced before, began to spring up in me at the sound, and make my heart palpitate with some joy.

"Doctor, I will go to sleep; but I must have my baby!"

"Afterward, my dear—afterward; you are not strong enough yet. Trust me, everything is right, and you shall have it as soon as you have rested a little."

"I cannot rest till I have seen it. O doctor! nurse! *do give* me my baby!"

My agitation was rising. The nurse glanced at the doctor, and the doctor nodded at the nurse, and in another moment a bundle of flannel was laid on my left arm, and I trembled with eagerness as I pulled it open. A fat, pulpy, red face met my view, with a nose that seemed to be spread half over it, two weak, swollen eyes feebly blinking at the light, and a mouth that was slit from ear to ear—in fact, the orthodox newborn baby.

But I don't think I saw what she was like. I was experiencing that marvelous thrill that comes over a woman when the child of the man she loves is first placed in her arms; and in the unconscious little creature beside me I saw only Hugh's representative. Hugh in his strength and beauty—Hugh in his imprudence and boldness—Hugh in his love for and protection of me, Hugh on his death-bed! Oh, I had never missed Hugh before as I missed him when I first held his baby in my arms! Where was he to rejoice over this wonderful thing with me? to be thankful for my safety, to assure me he would love it for my sake and his own? Where was the father of my child? I only felt *half a mother* without him. The first word I uttered, as I looked at my little daughter's features, was his name. The first welcome I gave her were the tears that welled up weakly into my eyes at the remembrance that he could never see her.

"Hugh!" I exclaimed brokenly, as I squeezed the little bundle to my bosom and turned my face round upon the pillow.

"Come, come! this will never do!" said the doctor, as he hurriedly mixed some horrid decoction in a glass. "Here, my dear, drink this; and, nurse, take the child into another room until Mrs. Power has had a sleep."

"No, no!" I said, imploringly. "I will drink whatever you like, doctor; but pray don't take my baby from me!"

"Will you promise not to talk any more, then, or even to think?"

"I will promise anything if you will leave my baby here."

So, fearing the effect of opposition, I suppose, they did as I desired them, and, with my lips pressed upon the face of my infant, who, with the instinct of young animals, seemed to understand I was her mother, and to be quite contented to lie where she was, I sunk off into a sleep as placid as her own.

It was very curious to watch Aunt Tessie on her first visit of inspection to my room. It was on the evening of the same day, and I had waked up from sleep much refreshed, and eager to show off my new treasure to the household. My little girl, whom I had scarcely let out of my arms, except for the briefest interval, since the moment of her birth, was awake and quiet, and in the

possible condition for being exhibited; and Aunt Tessie, having been duly informed that I was ready to receive her, entered the room on tiptoe, and advanced to the bedside as though she were prepared to see me laid out for burial. Poor old lady! her face was very pale and scared-looking; and I have often thought since that perhaps she suffered more during those long hours of suspense than I had given her credit for. The smiling face I turned to greet her with must have somewhat surprised her.

"Look, Aunt Tessie!" I exclaimed, eagerly, "isn't she a beauty? Her eyes are quite gray by daylight; I'm sure they will be like *his*. And isn't she big? Nurse says she must weigh twelve pounds; but she won't weigh her because its unlucky. And she has such dear little feet!"

Aunt Tessie gazed at the baby without speaking. Did any regret for her barren life flash through her at that moment? If it did, I was too selfishly excited to [illegible]ed it.

"I am so glad it's a girl, Aunt Tessie; it's so much nicer than a boy, except for the name. I did want to call it after him, my poor darling. But I shall always think of Hugh when I look at her, whatever she may be named. She sha'n't be 'Katharine;' I hate my own name, though it was poor mamma's."

"My dear, are you not talking too much?" said Aunt Tessie, solemnly.

"A great deal too much, ma'am, as I've said a dozen times to-day, if I've said it once," interrupted the nurse; "and Mrs. Power will be making herself quite ill if she don't attend to what the doctor tells her."

"Oh, nonsense, nurse! I am too happy to lie here and say nothing. I should burst if you didn't let me talk just a little; and about my own child, too! Aunt Tessie, what do you think of her?"

"I think you have cause to be very grateful, my dear. But I can hardly believe it even now; and you won't be sixteen till next month! Dear, dear! it seems almost incredible!"

"But it is true, nevertheless," I replied, with glee. "It is my own, own baby! Oh! *I love it.*"

I kissed the little creature's face all over as I spoke, and I think poor Aunt Tessie sighed.

"I suppose I ought to write to Lady Power to-night, and let her know the news. I have not been in the habit of corresponding with her ladyship; but she must be the most proper person to hear of such an event."

"Oh, yes, do, Aunt Tessie! and tell her the things all fit beautifully, and that baby is the most lovely little thing that ever was born, and that her eyes are gray, and she is very fat, and nurse says her hair will curl when she gets older."

"Yes, ma'am; and if you'll be saying good-evening to Mrs. Power now, I'll make her comfortable for the night," said the nurse, with a look of meaning at Aunt Tessie, who rose to leave me.

"Aunt Tessie," I whispered shyly, as she bent over me, "I'm afraid I've not been as grateful for everything as I ought to have been. Will you ask God to forgive me? Will you say I am sorry, and now I've got baby I do mean to try to be better?"

"My dear, why don't you say it yourself? Not but that I shall return thanks for your preservation, Katharine—and have already done so. But surely you are not too weak to say your prayers? There is no need of a set form, my dear; the fewest words often most best. And you must not forget that your child and you have a Father in heaven."

The words sunk to the bottom of my godless little breast. How often during the past months—how often during all the years of my life—had I remembered that I had a Father in heaven? Had I ever thanked Him for my joy? Had I ever cried to Him in my sorrow? Hugh had thought of Him at the last, and wished he had served Him better; but even Hugh's death had not induced me to seek comfort at the hands of the God who had taken him away. And now He had sent me this little child to love and comfort me; and if I did not remember to thank Him for His goodness, might He not take her from me also? I trembled at the awful thought! I thought of the time when Hugh had spoken to me of religion (for it had often been his favorite theme

when we were quiet and alone), and how he had urged me to place more faith in our heavenly Father, and to cling to the offices of the Church and the practice of prayer as my best safeguard against all the trials and temptations of the world. And I had listened, because it was Hugh that spoke to me, and gone away and forgotten all about it, and lived alone in my misery, as if there were no God in heaven to pity my sufferings or to relieve them. But now the remembrance of my darling's dying faith in this unseen Father came back to my mind, and my baby seemed to be, indeed, what Dr. Carlisle had called her, a messenger from heaven and Him. I felt now that I *must* pray that God would protect my little child, and let her grow up to comfort me; and the first real prayer I had ever uttered came forth from my lips. "O God! be a father to my poor fatherless baby and keep her safely, and don't let her ever miss dear Hugh. And if my darling is with You, tell him I'm safe, and a little happy again, and I love him so much still—and the baby, for his sake." The holy office of maternity had already commenced to do its blessed work. The mere fact of being a mother made me ashamed to neglect the duties of a child.

Then the effort of speaking seemed to bring the real, present Unseen Presence home, and I clasped my hands above me reverently. "O God! make me good for baby's sake," I said, "and that we may go to Hugh together. I am very much obliged to You for having kept me safely during this dreadful illness, and I *would* like to be good and serve You, if I can. And I love Mary, because Hugh loved her so," I added, in a very low whisper, half afraid that I was saying something treasonable, and that if the nurse overheard me she might whip the baby away, lest it should be polluted; but still hoping that God might be pleased to hear it, and that my beloved Hugh might, in some roundabout manner, come to hear it too. And the allusion set me thinking that I would rather call my little girl by the Divine Mother's name than by any other.

"I will have her baptized 'Mary,'" I thought to myself, with a sudden glow of pleasure at the idea that Hugh would have chosen that name for her, and that there was something I still could do that would have pleased my husband had he been there, "and I will call her May for short; and I will teach her to love the May for his sake—my own dear boy!"

I was quite fixed in this resolve, and not all Aunt Tessie's insinuations that Sir Thomas and Lady Power might consider themselves aggrieved, if they were not allowed to choose my baby's name, could make me alter it.

"I know that Hugh would have chosen 'Mary,'" I said, resolutely, "and I won't have her christened anything else. And Mr. Dean shall christen her at Christ Church, as soon as ever I am well enough to go out; and then they may say what they like, but they won't be able to alter it."

But a few days afterward my ideas on this subject received some small check from a letter written to me by my father-in-law, in which, after having congratulated me on the birth of my baby, and expressed the pleasure of the entire household on the reception of the news, he went on to say:

"I did not consider it necessary, my dear Katharine, to tell you before what it now becomes right that you should hear. The life of a little infant is so uncertain a thing, that I thought it better to wait and see whether your child was likely to live before I informed you that the estates and income, which would have been our dear Hugh's, being strictly entailed in the direct line, will devolve at my death upon his daughter. The little girl is, in fact, my heiress, and it is, of course, the wish of Lady Power and myself that she should be brought up in a manner consistent with her future position. We were disappointed that you would not consent to her being born at Gentian's Cross; but, of course, you will not think of having her christened until you come to us. If you have a Catholic priest in Guildford, you might have her baptized before crossing; but leave the less simple part of the ceremony to be accomplished in our own church. We do not wish to bias you with respect to a name for the child; but Lady Power is called 'Georgina,' and our dear

second name was given to him after his mother."

The receipt of this letter was a shock to me. To hear that my baby was a great heiress, and, if she lived, would be a very rich woman, was almost a matter of indifference. At present, she was nothing but my little tender baby, and we had everything we required, and the future was a long, long way off to both of us; and I had hardly more capability of looking forward than she had. But to learn that I was expected to have her baptized a Roman Catholic was quite a different thing.

I had never dreamt it would be required —it took me completely by surprise. It was not that I had any objection to the religion —why should I have, who had no religion for myself? If Hugh had lived, it would have come quite natural to see him take his child to his own Church, and have her baptized by one of his own priests. I should not have wished it to be otherwise.

But Hugh was dead, and I and my baby were left alone; and I felt as though she would not be so much my own child if she were brought up a Catholic, while I remained a Protestant. All the Powers were Catholics, and my baby would be one of them, and I should be shut out in the cold alone.

I could not bear the thought. I cried over it for a whole day, and made myself ill. Aunt Tessie did not entirely sympathize with my concern. She loved to have a dig at the Roman Catholics whenever she could. She called them idolatrous, and superstitious, and priest-ridden, after the good old Protestant fashion, whenever she had an opportunity; but, in this instance, I think the glitter of the gold dazzled her unworldly eyes a little, and she dilated more on the extraordinary indifference I displayed toward my child's prospects than on my dismay at finding she was to profess a different religion from myself.

"It's a most wonderful opening for her, Katharine," she said, "and I'm surprised you don't see it. I shouldn't wonder if the Powers offer to take her right off your hands as soon as she's done teething."

"*Take her off my hands!*" I echoed in *dismay; "take my baby away* from me! They shall kill me first! But they can't, Aunt Tessie, can they? It's not law."

"Dear me, Katharine, you need not be so vehement. But though, of course, it's a great pity the little girl should be reared in the errors of Popery, and taught to worship graven images, instead of the true God—"

"Don't talk such nonsense!" I cried irreverently. "You don't know what you're saying, Aunt Tessie. Dear Hugh never did any such thing—I am sure of that."

"Well, my dear, if he didn't, depend on it, he *ought* to have done so. However, as I was saying, though it's very sad, yet as it is, you see—and the estate being entailed and all—I suppose it becomes quite a necessity that the child should be brought up in the religion of her father's family."

"I wouldn't have minded it if Hugh had lived," I said despondently.

"What difference can that make, Katharine?"

"I don't know—but it does. Hugh was a Catholic; but he loved me, and was everything that was best and dearest. As for these other people, I don't care for them, nor they for me, and I can't say why—only it makes me miserable."

"This is childish," replied Aunt Tessie; and I dare say it was; but the idea became fixed in my mind, and I was not the less unhappy about it.

I had sufficient sense to see that, under the circumstances, it was wisest and best my baby should be reared in her father's faith; and the fact that it had been her father's faith greatly reconciled me to the notion; but I was not so easily persuaded to adopt Sir Thomas's hint about her name. I disliked the name of "Georgina." I could not fancy the child by that appellation. I was most unfavorably predisposed toward my mother-in-law, and I determined that my baby should not be called after her. Yet I felt terribly afraid of the whole family, and could not tell what forces might not be brought to bear upon me if I carried her over to Ireland before she had been christened.

So as soon as ever I was well enough to get about again, and had dismissed the nurse, and freed myself from the momently guar-

dianship of that most vigilant of jailers, I slipped out of the cottage one morning, with my child in my arms, and carried her into the little Catholic chapel where dear Hugh used to say his prayers, and had her made a Christian before any one knew anything about the matter.

"I have just had baby baptized," I said boldly, as I bore her back into Aunt Tessie's parlor, and sank down on the sofa, exhausted with my heavy burden.

"Baptized! Good gracious me, Katharine, what an extraordinary girl you are! Why couldn't you have told me of your intention? And without sponsors, too? How could it be done?"

"Oh, I explained to the priest that we were going to take a journey; and she's only baptized, you know. She can be properly finished off when she gets to Gentian's Cross, and then the Powers may find sponsors for her, if they will. But they can't alter her name," I added, with a chuckle.

"What may her name be, then?"

"Hugh Mary."

"Katharine, you must be mad! What! call a girl by a man's name? It appears positively indelicate to me."

"I don't care if it's delicate or indelicate," I rejoined, shortly. "That's her name, and she'll have to stick to it. I wasn't going to have my child called by any of their absurd Georginas or Juliettas. She's the only thing left me of Hugh, and I choose she shall bear his name."

"But you *can't* call her *Hugh*."

"I shall call her anything I choose; but I mean to call her 'May.' And I am sure Hugh would have liked the name, and so do I—and there's an end of it, isn't there, my darling?" I concluded, addressing the baby.

"Well, Katharine, you always were headstrong and incomprehensible to me; but this is the wildest thing, I think, you ever did. *Miss Hugh Power!* I never heard of such an idea! Every one will ask what it means. I only hope it may not induce Sir Thomas and Lady Power to resign their good intentions on the little girl's behalf."

"How can they if the estates are entailed?" I demanded. I was growing very wise with regard to the things of this world.

"Oh! but there is so much more they can do, if they choose—her education and bringing up, and so forth. But to have a young lady called 'Hugh' running about the place! It will make things most disagreeable, I should think, for every one concerned."

"But she is to be called 'May,' I tell you."

"It is not much better than the other. They are both fantastic, and out of the common way. But you never do anything like other people, Katharine. You never did, and I suppose you never will. Well, we must hope for the best. There are two letters for you from Dublin on the drawing-room table. Shall I ring for Jane to take the baby while you read them."

"No; baby and I will go and read them together," I replied as I left the room, dragging my burden with me. At that time I could hardly bear to let the child out of my arms. I was wasting all my newly-acquired strength with the unusual exertions I was making. But I had a silly, though tantalizing, fear that she would never be quite so much my own child if I gave up the care or trouble of her to any other person.

CHAPTER XI.

GOOD-BY TO GUILDFORD.

The letters were from Sir Thomas and Lady Power, both urgently pressing me to go and stay at Gentian's Cross as soon as ever I was strong enough to undertake the journey.

"You must take pity on our great anxiety to become acquainted as soon as possible with you and the dear little stranger," wrote Lady Power; "and do your utmost to be with us by next month. The climate here is more genial than in England, and likely to agree better with the baby, and every one acknowledges that our part of the country is most healthy. All my family were born and brought up here, and you know what a specimen of vigorous man-

our beloved Hugh was. Indeed, my dear Katharine, I have become most anxious to see one who was so dear to him as yourself, and to give you the welcome due to a daughter of our house. I am sure you will try to fall in with the wishes of Sir Thomas and myself in coming to Gentian's Cross as soon as possible."

The rest of the letter was written much in the same strain; but I was not to be taken in by it. I knew that Lady Power had been very proud of her only son. I had little doubt that she felt the blow of his early death keenly; but, if she had been so devoted to him and his memory, why had she left me for so many weary months without a word of consolation or sympathy?

Aunt Tessie accounted for it on the score of her pride and maternal affection having been so deeply wounded by Hugh's runaway marriage with me; that she had expected and intended great things for him, and that his conduct had upset all her plans. That might have been true, and I acknowledged that she had reason to be angry; but when the poor boy died, so suddenly and sadly, leaving a widow of fifteen on the world alone, surely his early death might have been accounted by his own mother to have expiated his boyish folly. If she had loved him so much, would not her heart have melted then at the thought of *my* sorrow and *my* loss? Yet not a line had she ever written to me, nor sent me a message even, until she heard that I was likely to become a mother, and knew that if my infant lived it would be heir-apparent to her own and her husband's wealth. When she heard the Almighty was about to send me consolation, my Lady Power thought it time she should offer it likewise. Was it done for *my* sake? I felt it was not. I felt it was but a carrying on of the pride she had cherished for her son, and that, had I continued childless, she would never have troubled her head about me. I might have killed myself with grief for the boy she professed to adore, in my lonely seclusion, and Lady Power would only have considered it a good thing I was out of the way, and not likely to trouble them again. But, as the mother of their *grandchild and heiress, I had* become a different creature. In me was partly wrapped up the well-being of the baby; for her sake I must be treated to consideration and flattery. I was young, but I could see through that! What feeling did it awaken in my breast? Pride, too—though of a different nature. Yes! they might say what they liked, and think what they liked—these Powers!—but *I* was the mother of *my own child*, and they could not get at her except through flattery of me.

I did not shrink from going to Dublin. On the contrary, I wished to go there, and prove to them that, though I *was* only sixteen, I was old enough to comport myself as became the girl whom Hugh had loved, and the mother of the heiress of Gentian's Cross.

Poor fool! A mouse might as well have pricked up its ears, and curled its tail, and marched boldly into a lion's den, determined to show what a brave animal it was, and how well it could hold its own. The mouse might possess all the necessary spirit to make the attempt; but what would be the use of its spirit when once inside the lion's jaws?

So, innocently, but defiantly, did I cause my boxes to be packed up, and, with Jane as my nurse, and the baby clasped closely in my arms, left the safe precincts of Ivy Cottage to cross the Irish Channel for Gentian's Cross.

I don't think Aunt Tessie was altogether sorry to part with us. Her behavior toward me had been much modified since I had returned to her house a widow; and the addition I had made to her modest income must have been felt when I departed again. Still I had considerably upset her little *ménage*, and I don't think she ever got used, nor do I think she ever would have got used, to the noise and confusion consequent on the baby's appearance.

She was the very moral and essence of a stereotyped old maid. It seems strange to me now that I should have left Guildford without any idea of, or allusion to, revisiting it. Aunt Tessie expressed a conventional wish, on saying good-by, that we should soon meet again, and I echoed it; but I had formed no plans for the future, and I carried all my possessions with me. My whole mind

was wrapped up in my child, and I think if I had any notion for the future, it was that I should take a tiny cottage somewhere, and live with Jane and my baby, and attend on the latter night and day, until she had grown up into a beautiful woman, who would be like my shadow, and go with me everywhere. Any way, that cottage was not to be at Guildford; for I climbed up to the wood the day before I left it, to say good-by to the place where my dear dead boy had sat and talked to me of love and marriage, and laid his baby down on the same spot, under the shade of the hawthorn, now all white again with blossom, and called on him there to come back to us, if only for one moment, to say that he would be with us wherever we might go. But the only answer that came to me was the waving of the hawthorn-tree by a sudden breeze that sent the frail May-flowers showering down upon my baby's face, and caused her to smile—a smile that was too much like his not to make me cry. And then I had pulled a bunch of blossoms for a keepsake of the place, and, turning homeward with my child, felt as though I had been saying farewell again to my Hugh's grave. I think I was sorry to go even after that. I crept into the little Catholic chapel on the last morning of my stay there, and timidly knelt down in the seat the priest had told me Hugh had always occupied, and bent my head upon my hands. The building was quite empty, but lamps were burning here and there, and the heavy smell of incense still lingered about it. I felt nervous and solemn, as if Hugh's spirit were kneeling beside me, or some of the saints of whom he used to talk so often were watching what I did.

Still it was a church, and the scene of my child's baptism; and though I felt hot and uncomfortable lest some one should come in and recognize me, I knelt on, praying to God not to let Hugh forget me, and feeling as though Hugh's God must hear me there better than in any other place. When I had knelt for about half an hour I got up, and silently approached the door. A stoup of holy-water confronted me. I knew its use, and, dipping my finger in it, wetted my forehead. As I did so I felt an increase of comfort. It seemed as if the action had drawn me nearer to Hugh, and I left the chapel regretfully, wishing I had gone there oftener while I had had the opportunity.

I pass over the horrors of the journey—a long, unintermitting journey, by cab, and rail, and steamer, is at all times a duty rather than pleasure; and, when it is performed with the accompaniment of a baby of three months old, it becomes something too terrible even to look back upon.

Jane and I went from Guildford to London, from London to Holyhead, from Holyhead to Kingstown, and from Kingstown to Dublin, *with the baby!* and what *she* thought of the baby by the time we arrived at the Westland Row Station I know not, and most likely she would have been afraid to say; but if I had not been her mother, and she my sole possession in the world, the only thing left to remind me of my beloved Hugh, I verily believe I should have thrown her out of window or chucked her overboard. Did ever baby whine as that baby whined, or keep so horribly wide awake and lively, or so unmistakably over-eat itself, or insist on being danced at the carriage-windows when our arms ached with fatigue, or walked up and down the vessel when we were so sick we could hardly stand?

Well, all things have an end, and we reached Dublin at last—tired out and longing for rest, but safe and together; and the first sight that greeted my astonished eyes was the figure of Sir Thomas Power waiting for us on the platform—Sir Thomas, whom I had imagined to be twenty miles away at Gentian's Cross. This *was* a surprise, but more was to follow.

"Never mind the luggage, my dear," he said, as he handed me on to the platform. "My servants are here to see after that. I have a carriage in attendance, and you must come on at once to the Shelburne Hotel. Lady Power could not deny herself the pleasure of being the first to welcome you to Ireland, and she is waiting there for you."

And so, without time for speculation or remonstrance, just as I was—pale, travel-stained, and disordered—Sir Thomas Power pushed my baby, my nurse, and myself into

one of the hotel vehicles, and carried us straight off into the presence of my august mother-in-law.

CHAPTER XII.

MY CHILD'S GRANDMOTHER.

I SUPPOSE, if I had had more time to think about it, I should have become terribly alarmed at the immediate prospect of meeting my mother-in-law. As it was, however, the baby, greatly objecting to the change in her mode of traveling, lamented so piteously all the way between the station and the hotel that my attention was completely taken up with her. For the last three months I had lived so entirely in and for this child, that I had developed into something not much better than a head nurse, and had no eyes nor ears for anybody or anything except her exacting little self and multifarious wants. But the mere possession of her had so puffed me up with pride and self-consciousness that I had not the least idea that I made both myself and my baby ridiculous in the sight of others by my assumption of importance. I would not resign her to the care of Jane, even though Sir Thomas held out his arm to conduct me up the broad staircase of the Shelburne Hotel, but carried her pompously into Lady Power's sitting-room myself, her long robes and cloak almost sweeping the ground as I moved along, and threatening to upset me and my dignity together.

As we entered, a lady, whom I had concluded to be my mother-in-law, rose hastily from her seat near one of the windows and advanced to receive us.

I had hardly time to lift my eyes to hers when, exclaiming hastily, "How do you do? Is this the baby?" she seized the child from my arms and carried it to the farther end of the room. I uttered a note of dismay, but neither Lady Power nor Sir Thomas seemed to hear it. They were bending together over the infant—she seated in a low chair, and he *leaning over the back—both peering curiously into the little unformed features of their granddaughter. But my baby was three* months old—she was beginning to recognize people—and the strange faces gazing into hers soon frightened her. She puckered up her button mouth and began to cry. At that sound I darted forward.

"Please give her to me. She does not like strangers. She will not be quiet unless I take her," I said, imploringly.

But Lady Power held her close.

"Oh, no, my dear! you just sit down and rest yourself. She is not going to cry, bless her!—Sir Thomas, be good enough to touch the bell for Doran to take Mrs. Power's things, and tell them to serve up breakfast."

Still the baby whimpered, and I trembled with indignation, longing, yet not daring, to make a second attempt to wrest it from my mother-in-law's arms. Doran was a long, thin, prim-looking lady's-maid, who had been in the Power family, I found out afterward, before my Hugh was born.

"Here is the baby, Doran," exclaimed her mistress, briskly, as soon as she appeared. "A fine child, isn't she? The regular Power eyes and brow!"

"She's as fine a child as I ever see, my lady," replied Doran, without noticing my presence, "and the very moral of poor Master Hugh."

Lady Power's face clouded over for a moment.

"Very like him!" she said, softly, as she bent down and kissed the baby. She looked more womanly then than she had done before. For, during this little episode, I had had an opportunity of observing her general appearance, and what I saw of it I did not fancy. She was tall and handsome, with rather a florid complexion, small features, dark eyes, and a profusion of gray hair; but the expression of her mouth was hard and cold, and her eyebrows were too strongly marked for those of a woman.

I might have felt indignant at Lady Power passing me over with so little notice, but that circumstance did not affect me. I was only longing to get back my baby safely into my arms, half angry that she should have been taken from me so unceremoniously, and half frightened lest between her grandmother and her grandmother's maid she should come to harm. For what (thought I in my

ignorant conceit) should old women know about handling of babies?

"This is Mrs. Power, Doran. Show her into the bedroom, please, to take off her things; and for the young woman—is this your personal attendant, my dear?" continued Lady Power, intimating poor Jane with a wave of her jeweled fingers.

"She is baby's nurse," I commenced.

"*The nurse!* I should think she was much too young and inexperienced for such a responsible office. However, it was quite necessary you should bring some one over with you, and we shall soon remedy the evil. Let the young person go too, Doran, and remain in your room till we start for Gentian's Cross."

"But I would rather take baby with me, please!" I said, looking anxiously toward my little May, who was making preparations for a grand howl.

"Oh, I'll take care of the baby! I can't let her go just yet. And she's as good as gold!" replied Lady Power, as she began to jog the child up and down on her knee.

I left the room regretfully. I would have given worlds to remain, but I felt I *must* go, and the sooner I had removed my things the sooner I should return. I had just tossed my crape bonnet and mantle on the bed when a loud wail from the sitting-room sent me flying back again. Lady Power was walking up and down the apartment with the child over her shoulder, slapping it violently on the back, while little May, her face crimson with excitement and the discomfort occasioned by the dragging of her heavy cloak, was roaring babyfully.

I rushed at her—I made a supreme effort to regain her—but it was no use: Lady Power *would not let go.*

"Now, my dear, you had much better go back to the bedroom, and trust her to me. She'll be as good as possible if you'll leave her alone."

"But she is hungry, and she is cross. I want to take off her things and make her comfortable," I said, despairingly.

"It's only a little show of temper. All children are so at times. And she will never get used to us if you follow her about in this manner."

"But it is so soon, and she is tired with the journey. Please let me have her, Lady Power," I went on, imploringly.

But my mother-in-law only threw the child about more vigorously, and made sounds that were intended to be soothing. I sank down into a chair, and began to cry.

"My dear Katharine! what is the matter?" inquired Sir Thomas, anxiously.

"I want my baby," I said, wearily, as I listened to her long-continued wails. "She will never be quiet till I take her again."

"My dear Lady Power, Katharine wants her child," he exclaimed to his wife. "Pray let her have it! She is overtired and excited," he continued, in a lower tone; "you really should pay her a little more attention than you do."

Lady Power turned and regarded me for a moment with contemptuous astonishment, then placed the squalling infant in my arms. I buried my face in that of my child. She was quiet directly, although I wetted it with my tears—tears of disappointment at the reception I had met with, though, Heaven knows, I had never expected much.

"How very extraordinary!" ejaculated my mother-in-law. "Does fatigue always affect you in this manner? For I cannot believe it has anything to do with my nursing my granddaughter—my own son's child! It would have been most strange if I had *not* been pleased to see her and to nurse her."

"Oh, no!" I faltered; "it is not that, indeed! At least—it is very foolish of me, I know, but—Hugh—all I have left—very tired from traveling"—fell in broken sentences from my half-hidden lips.

Lady Power seemed to take the allusion to her son as a species of affront, as though I would have blamed her for not mourning him as much as I did.

"Of course we all know you have experienced a terrible loss," she answered coldly; "a *terrible* loss. No one has better reason to know it than ourselves; and you will not find, I fancy, that our beloved Hugh is either forgotten or ungrieved for at Gentian's Cross. Still, I must say that, under the circumstances, and considering all things, I should have imagined you would have be

pleased, rather than otherwise, to see the welcome bestowed by his mother on your child."

"I am glad," I said, timidly; "indeed, I am not ungrateful, but I cannot bear to hear her cry, and"—I did not finish my sentence, but I might have done so by saying that I could not bear to see her monopolized by her grandmother, and that the sight struck to my heart like a deadly warning of what my future was to be—a constant striving to make my child distinguish between her father's family and me—to make her remember that, however near and dear they might be to her, mine was a claim that no other person on earth could share or disannul.

"That is so very childish a remark, I hardly expected to hear it from you," returned my mother-in-law, in allusion to my last speech. "Children must cry sometimes, and be intrusted to the care of others, or they become a nuisance. What will you do with her during our breakfast? You can hardly keep her in your arms at the table!"

"I will give her to Jane," I said, in a subdued voice, as I rose to my feet; "she knows Jane quite well!"

"I will take her for you, Mrs. Power," exclaimed Doran, who had followed me into the room.

But I was not to be put down by Doran. I insisted on carrying the infant into the bedroom myself; and, when I returned, I knew by the way in which Lady Power was whispering to her maid, and the suddenness with which they separated on my reappearance, that they had been discussing my conduct together, and that not favorably.

The meal that followed was a most uncomfortable one. I felt so wretched that I could not eat, and my mother-in-law's manner continued to be so stiff and cold that it did not encourage me to shake off the feeling. Sir Thomas tried to promote our sociability by talking to me of his daughters and Gentian's Cross, but in my ignorance of the subjects it was difficult for me to do more than listen, and the conversation visibly flagged.

After breakfast, however, I found we *were not to go on to* Gentian's Cross until the afternoon. There was the baby therefore to be washed and attended to, and, in the pleasure derivable from assisting me in these operations, Lady Power recovered her good temper.

I always bathed and dressed the child myself, and was very proud of my dexterity and skill. I dare say I did not do either on any orthodox plan, but the baby approved of both, and hitherto no one had ventured to find fault with my method.

Yet, on that morning, Lady Power sat by and made me so nervous by the running commentary she kept up on my actions, that I nearly dropped my child into the bath, and put on all her things hind-foremost. It even ended in making her cry—a sin which had never been laid at my door before.

"There, my dear! I thought how it would be," exclaimed Lady Power. "No one who knows anything about an infant would put it right into water at that tender age. No wonder the poor little thing doesn't like it. You should have washed her head first, and then carefully dried it; but I will show you how to do it properly to-morrow. You would have had this poor child with a dreadful cold if you had pursued this plan much longer."

"But I have always washed her this way," I answered, deprecatingly, "and she has never been ill yet."

"That is no reason she should not be; besides, you have had no one to instruct you. It takes many years of experience to comprehend the best means of treating young children. You will find the nurse I have provided for our grandchild everything you can desire in that respect."

"The nurse!" I faltered.

"Yes, my dear! of course. You did not suppose we should have sent for our dear Hugh's little girl over to Gentian's Cross without having everything properly provided for her reception. This nurse is a treasure! She was with my daughter Juliet for four years. You can trust this little one to her with the utmost confidence."

"But Jane is baby's nurse, Lady Power. She has had the care of her ever since her birth."

"That was all very well at first, my dear,

but the responsibility of looking after her will increase daily. This young woman also," continued Lady Power, looking at Jane, "is, I presume, a Protestant."

"Yes, she is! Like I am," I replied, I am afraid, rather defiantly.

"Exactly," resumed my mother-in-law. "Well, the one is a misfortune we cannot remedy, but the other it is our duty to correct. And this young person's religion totally unfits her, in my opinion, to be my grandchild's personal attendant."

"Totally, my lady," echoed Doran.

How I hated Doran, with her light eyes, freckled complexion, and sandy hair! How I resented her joining in the conversation her mistress was holding with myself, and siding, as it were, against me! I bent over my baby with a face crimson from excitement. Jane's was as red as my own, but she dared not speak. There was only one thing that prevented my doing so, though, and that was the thought that it was Hugh's mother that sat opposite to me. I was very ungrateful, too (so I told myself the first time I had leisure to think of it), to resent her solicitude on my child's behalf. After all, it could only be meant for kindness. And yet I did not feel it so, but already wished I had never left the quiet seclusion of Guildford, where, at least, no one had presumed to interfere with my management of my own child.

When she had fallen off into her morning sleep, and I had placed her, rosy and warm, upon the bed, and left Jane watching by her side, I followed Lady Power again into the sitting-room.

"You have dipped your cuff into the water," she observed, as we seated ourselves near the window.

I drew my handkerchief across the deep crape trimming of my dress. The action somehow reminded me to look at hers. To my surprise, I noticed for the first time that she did not wear black. It was true that my darling had been dead for twelve months, and that, strictly speaking, perhaps his mother had a right to assume a gray-silk dress. Still, I thought she had loved him so much, and mourned him so deeply; and where that is the case it becomes almost as painful to leave off our black clothes as to assume them. It is a sort of consolation to let the world read how miserable and forlorn we feel. We are jealous of its daring to imagine that we can cease to grieve, or recommence to take pleasure in the vanities and follies of this earth. I bit my lips and pressed my hand tightly over my crape cuff, as the idea passed through my mind. I felt as if I were pressing Hugh's dear hand, and assuring him with all the strength of my girlish heart, which had loved him as deeply as it was capable of loving, that *whoever* forgot, I still remembered.

Lady Power again appeared to interpret the expression of my face, and, as in the former case, to resent it.

"I see you still keep your first mourning," she said. "I suppose you have had few opportunities of wearing it at Guildford, that it is almost as good as new."

"I have not worn it much," I answered, "but, if I had worn it quite out, I should have had my new dresses made just in the same way. I can't forget. It seems like yesterday to me."

"No one *forgets*, if you are alluding to my dear son," replied Lady Power hastily, "but it is not necessary to remain always in mourning to convince people of the fact. There is an etiquette in all such matters that I like to see attended to—and it is equally bad taste to make ourselves conspicuous by disregarding it in one way as in the other."

"But I *ought* to wear mourning for him longer than anybody else," I remarked, with a view to conciliating her ruffled temperament.

"Do you think so? I should imagine a mother's claim to be as strong as that of any one. *You* knew my poor boy, at the most, for a year. *I* brought him up from the moment he entered the world."

"But I was his wife—he loved me best of all," I replied, with trembling eagerness.

"Perhaps so! I have no wish to dispute it. But at the same time, my dear Katharine, I have no desire to discuss the subject, which is naturally a very painful one to me. There are periods in all men's lives when they appear to be blinded to their best interests, and Sir Thomas and I both feel that, if our beloved son did for a while forget what was due to his parents and family, his

untimely death forbids that we should continue to resent his conduct. Therefore I prefer never alluding to it."

"But he never forgot," I said, sobbing, for her chilly manner had made me break down entirely. "To the last he spoke of you, and wished you would write to and—"

"My dear Katharine, I have already said I prefer not speaking of the past. It cannot be undone, and the only thing we have to deal with now is the present. Had my son not left this child behind him to take his place with respect to that part of the property that is entailed, we should have considered it our duty to forget as soon as possible that we had ever possessed or lost him. As it is, however, Providence has seen fit to send us a remembrance of him; and as we did our duty by Hugh, so I trust we shall do it by his daughter. But there is no need we should revive unpleasant recollections more than is strictly necessary. Suppose we talk of something else."

But I whimpered and was silent. To have turned the subject then would have seemed nothing less than rank ingratitude to me—ingratitude toward my dear dead lover, whose memory I promised myself every day to cherish to my life's end—and blasphemy against the tender tie that had connected us, and called out against oblivion. So I cried, and said nothing.

"The little girl has only been half baptized as yet, I believe," continued Lady Power, in a shriller, quicker tone, intended to be cheerful. "I suppose you intend to have her, Georgina, as Sir Thomas desires?"

"She was fully baptized, and she is called 'Hugh Mary,' and the priest said no one could ever take those names away from her," I answered, with a sort of triumph.

Lady Power pursed up her mouth to conceal her annoyance.

"*Indeed!* Well, I suppose it could hardly be *our* part to find any fault with your selection, but I never heard of a young lady being called by a gentleman's name in my life before."

"I don't care if it is a gentleman's name or a lady's. I know it was my poor darling's name; and that baby belongs to him and to *me, and to no one else*; and I would have her called just what I liked, and what I am sure *he* would like, too, if he could speak and tell me."

"Well, never mind; it will be quite allowable to add any names we choose when the child is received with all the ceremonies of the Church," said my mother-in-law, with a coolness that aggravated me.

"But I don't wish her to have any other name," I cried, determinately.

"My dear Katharine, what you wish, or even I or Sir Thomas might wish, has nothing to do with the matter. We look upon this infant, not so much as our grandchild, as our heiress. If she lives, she will become the most powerful member of the family. It is not only becoming, then, but almost necessary, she should bear some of the family names. We never supposed you would have her otherwise than conditionally baptized, for which purpose the name of Mary was very appropriate. I regret you should have acted so far on your own responsibility as to give her any other name, unless it had been the one Sir Thomas suggested to you. However, as I said before, it can be added; and, as the Earl and Countess of Claretown have kindly consented to stand sponsors to her, I think her ladyship's name of Frances should certainly be included."

"My baby's sponsors! But I don't know them."

"You will have the honor of being introduced, of course, though you must be aware that their consent is due to their intimacy with our family. The Powers are one of the oldest Catholic families in Ireland, and connected with most of its aristocracy; Lady Claretown herself being a distant cousin of Sir Thomas, and naturally anxious to oblige us in a case of this kind. Her friendship may prove of the greatest benefit to the little girl in after-years."

"Hugh Mary Georgina Frances!" I murmured to myself, despondently. "What an awful name!"

"I see nothing awful in it at all," rejoined Lady Power tartly, "unless you allude to the part for which you are responsible. She must certainly be called Georgina! I am sure Sir Thomas will wish it to be so."

"I call her May," I said, boldly, "and I

ways mean to call her so, in remembrance of something Hugh once said to me."

"Well, my dear, you will of course follow your own inclination in the matter, and we can follow ours. There is no need we should have any dispute about a name; and indeed I consider all open disagreements on such trivial subjects exceedingly unladylike and unbecoming. How long does the little girl usually sleep in the morning?"

"I let her sleep as long as ever she chooses. Sometimes she doesn't wake till after luncheon."

"That is not right! Children should have their regular hours for sleep as well as for meals. But Raikes will soon bring her into good habits. She has an excellent method with babies. By-the-by, do you think it worth while to take the young woman you brought over with you to Gentian's Cross? It is not more than an hour's drive from here, and the child will be very good with us."

"But where can I leave Jane? What would she do?" I demanded in consternation.

"She might remain here, and return to England by the evening mail. Sir Thomas will see everything properly arranged for her comfort."

"But I am not going to part with Jane! I couldn't—she is so fond of baby, and she is one of my best friends! She was so kind to Hugh and me." I was about to continue when I suddenly remembered that my mother-in-law might not view the kindness with which poor Jane had helped her son to an elopement in the same light that I did.

"Do you intend to retain her as your own maid, then? She appears to me to be much too unformed for such position; and it will not be at all necessary you should keep one, as there are already two in attendance on my daughters and myself, and you can command the services of either at any time. Besides which, we are about as full now at Gentian's Cross as we can be, without inconvenience. But you must do as you think best!"

I perceived that Lady Power did not wish me to keep my servant, but I resented parting with her strongly, and especially in so summary a manner. I felt as if I should be entirely alone and unprotected were she to quit me.

"I cannot part with Jane," I repeated timidly, half afraid of what opposition to Lady Power's proposal might bring forth; "at all events till baby is older. And I like her to dress and undress me, and so—"

"Oh! very good," replied my mother-in-law, looking as if she thought it "very bad" the while. "There is no need to say anything more about it.—Sir Thomas, will you be kind enough to order luncheon for us, and tell Doran we shall start for Gentian's Cross in an hour's time?—Raikes begged we would not keep the baby out after sunset," she continued, turning to me; "and, like all good nurses, she is rather despotic. I should have brought her with me to receive her little charge, but I thought there might be some such complication as has arisen with regard to your own attendant. The barouche will be full as it is. But we must not start a moment later than three o'clock."

I pressed my teeth upon my under lip and answered nothing. I told myself that all this fussy, pompous preparation was intended as a compliment to my infant and to me, but I could not accept it gratefully. On the contrary, as I listened, during luncheon, to Lady Power's description of the day nursery and the night nursery at Gentian's Cross and Raikes's excellent method, and Lord and Lady Claretown's amiable acquiescence to stand sponsors at the coming christening, my spirits sank lower and lower, and I felt at last as if my own child were slipping away from my feeble grasp without my having the power to retain her, and that she would be my own child no longer.

CHAPTER XIII.

MY CHILD'S NURSE.

The drive from Dublin to Gentian's Cross was perfectly lovely, and, had I been in a better humor for admiring scenery, I must have enjoyed it. But I had been separated from Jane (who was stuck up in

rumble beside the footman), and sat opposite Sir Thomas and that horrid Doran with her keen eyes and sandy hair; little May, moreover, had become cross and restless, and my mother-in-law drove me wild by wrenching her from my arms every second, and making her scream with rage and fright combined. The journey seemed as though it occupied five hours instead of one; but it was over at last, and the carriage rolled through a magnificent park and pleasure-grounds until it reached the portico of the mansion which was to belong, some day, to the unconscious but horribly awake bundle I carried in my arms. As the hall-door was thrown open, I saw a stout, middle-aged woman, dressed in black silk with a white-muslin cap and apron, and accompanied by a young girl, standing curtesying in the hall. I felt at once this was the dreaded Raikes who was to take my baby from me, and my suspicions were at once confirmed by Lady Power.

"Ah, Mrs. Raikes! I thought you would be waiting to receive us. Here is your little charge, safe and well.—Will you give the infant to Mrs. Raikes, my dear? She will soon relieve you of all trouble on her account."

I did not know how to act. I was so encumbered with the weight of the child that I could not leave the carriage with her in my arms. Some one must take her from me; Mrs. Raikes's hands were extended for the purpose. I submitted to the force of circumstances because I knew not how to contend against them, and gave my darling over to the stranger. That was the first step. It appeared to be a necessary—nay, more, a most advisable—one; but I never could retrace it. It was but a trifle at the time, but with that action commenced the forging of the chain which was to bind my child to her father's family, and widen the distance between her and myself. It baptized her a Power. It sealed her as the heiress of Gentian's Cross and Derry Lodge, and half a dozen other properties; it deposed me to the level whence I had sprung! I did not know it at the time, of course, but from the moment my child was received *in the pompous arms* of Mrs. Raikes—solemnly delivered over to that experienced female as a sacred charge to be nurtured for the future glory of the Power family—I sank into a mere nothing by her side; only the girl who had brought Hugh's baby into the world—the medium through which it had pleased Providence to send an heiress to the estates—some one that had to be tolerated and made the best of, because she was the mother of the child, but entitled to no consideration or respect because the child was hers.

It may seem strange that a woman who had passed through the dignity of being a wife and mother should have submitted to be thrust into so unimportant a position without, at least, making a remonstrance. To this objection I have but one reply to make. I was only sixteen years of age, and the truth did not dawn on me until much later. When it did, I had too much sense not to perceive how much open opposition might injure the prospects of my child, and too much love for her not to be willing to sacrifice my own inclination for her benefit. But at the first home coming I was sick with trepidation and uncertainty, and the impression that there was nothing left to me except the baby. As soon as I had reached the hall I attempted to take her back from Mrs. Raikes's arms.

"Dear me, madam! I could not think of allowing you to carry her. But if you would like to see the nurseries, and will please step this way, I shall be most happy to show them to you."

"Mrs. Power cannot go at present," interposed my mother-in-law, who had joined us. "She is coming with me to the library. You take the child to her room, Raikes, and we will pay you a visit presently.—Come, my dear Katharine, I must introduce you to my daughters."

I kissed my baby hurriedly, and followed Sir Thomas and Lady Power through a lofty hall and up a wide staircase (which made me feel very small and mean) into a beautifully furnished library. Three ladies, who rose on our approach, were seated in it. They were my sisters-in-law, Margaret, Blanche, and Norah Power, and they none of them looked very young to me, although the

dest could not have been at that time more than seven-and-twenty. But my husband, who had six sisters, three married and three single, was the youngest of the whole family, and had been made almost as much of for that circumstance as for being the heir. Sir Thomas embraced his daughters very affectionately, although he had only been absent a few hours; but their mother was above such a display of weakness.

"Allow me to introduce Mrs. Power to you, my dears," she said, curtly, and then I was left standing by myself to confront my sisters-in-law, who came up, one by one, in a manner which would have seemed shy if it had not been accompanied by so piercing a scrutiny, and shook hands with me feebly and indifferently. No one of them was a *bit* like Hugh. I decided that in my own mind at once. But they were fine, handsome girls, with the dark hair and delicate complexions so indicative of their countrywomen. Margaret was the first to speak.

"But where is the baby?" she inquired —of her mother, not of me.

"Mrs. Raikes has taken it to the nursery, my dear. It has been sadly upset by the long journey, poor little thing!"

"Oh! I must go and see it!" she exclaimed, making for the door.

"And I"—"And I," echoed her sisters as they followed her.

I could not let them go alone—I was burning to exhibit my child, and I hurried after them.

"You had better remain here," said Lady Power; but I paid no attention to her suggestion.

"I must see baby!" I said, and joined the Misses Power just as they reached the staircase.

"Are you coming, too?" said Blanche in a tone of surprise.

"Oh, yes! I want to go to my baby. I cannot bear her to be with anybody else."

"I should have thought you would be rather glad to get rid of her for a while! Babies are a terrible nuisance."

"Do you think so? Mine never is. She is scarcely ever out of my arms."

"Well, I know Juliet's are, and we have a regular benefit of them every summer; and I can remember poor Hugh—" But here she pulled herself up and hesitated. She was not quite sure how I might take the mention of her brother.

"Don't mind speaking of him to me," I said in a low voice. "I like to hear his name. I often talk of him to baby."

But at this assertion they only stared at one another and dropped the conversation. The day and night nurseries were in a corridor on the second floor. Margaret Power knocked at the door before she ventured to open it.

"May we come in, Mrs. Raikes?" she said, as she stood on the threshold. "We want so much to see my brother's child."

Mrs. Raikes, who was evidently making preparations for a grand scrub of the baby, did not appear very much pleased at our interrupting her.

"Well, ladies, of course you can come in if you desire it, but I do wish you had waited till I had washed and dressed her. She's not fit to be seen as she is!"

"But she has had her bath already," I said quickly; "she cannot require another. I never bathe her except in the morning and evening."

Mrs. Raikes looked at me, not disrespectfully, but with an air of unmitigated authority—an authority which no one had ever presumed to call into question. She reminded me painfully at that moment of my whilom gaoler, the monthly nurse, only she looked more as if a duchess had consented to turn monthly nurse in order to bring up an heir-apparent to the throne in the way that he should go. I positively quailed before her eye and her rustling black-silk dress.

"It is quite necessary she should be washed and dressed again, madam," she replied. "She is rumpled and tumbled—not fit to be seen."

I flew to my child. She was lying half disrobed in a bassinet, profusely trimmed with white muslin, lace, and blue-satin ribbons. The young rogue was as happy as could be; kicking and cooing to herself as she reveled in her dishabille, and tried to grab the bunches of light ribbon that depended just above her nose. A tearful

of jealousy stabbed my heart as I saw that already she was quite at home, and the blue ribbons of her grand bassinet were distracting her attention from myself.

"Baby! Baby, darling! My little pet! My little love!" I said caressingly as I bent over and kissed her.

"Please not to raise her, madam," interposed Mrs. Raikes quickly. "She might take a cold with half her things off."

"Oh, let me see her!" and "Let me see her!" burst from my sisters-in-law as they crowded round the little cot and thrust me to one side. I listened to their rapturous remarks on her size, and features, and complexion, for some moments in pride; then, finding that they neither congratulated nor appealed to me in any way, I let my eyes wander over the apartment, and was astonished at the luxury it contained. Had it been prepared for the reception of a princess of the blood royal, it could not have been more sumptuously furnished. And on the table lay the garments, all fresh and new from the baby-linen warehouse, which Mrs. Raikes had spread out to dress my darling in—a lace robe and cap, and silken shoes, and the finest white cashmere shawl to throw over all. I could not feel angry; on the contrary, I felt proud, and pleased, and grateful; but, at the same time, I felt sad—both sad and subdued.

"Do let us see you wash and dress her, Mrs. Raikes," said Blanche Power presently in a coaxing voice. "She is such a little beauty; I want to see her naked."

"Oh, no, Miss Blanche! I couldn't think of such a thing! not to-day at all events. I never allow any one to be in the room when I am washing my babies. It is one of my strictest rules. So you must please to leave—both you and the other ladies—and when she's had her afternoon sleep I'll bring her down into the drawing-room for you to see."

But at this I waked up. I could not be turned out of the nursery like anybody else; just as if I were not my own child's mother!

"I have washed baby ever since her birth, nurse," I said, in a tone which I intended to be determined; "and I should not *like anybody to bathe her* without me. She will not be good with you. She will cry dreadfully directly she finds she is alone."

"I never had a baby cry with me yet, madam," replied Mrs. Raikes, as she continued to make preparations for the bath, "and I have nursed in the highest of families. I have not the least fear but what the little lady will be quite good with me, and I never break through my rules for any one."

"But I am her mother!" I urged, thinking she could not possibly understand the importance of my position.

"Oh, I know that, madam! and you've reason to be proud of her; but I never would bathe my babies before a third person, and I never will! The Countess of Mulligan had quite a fight with me about it when I first entered her ladyship's family, and so had Lady Moore, but they was obliged to give in to me at last, because it was the only terms on which I would serve them!"

"Don't say anything more about it," whispered Margaret Power to me. "You'll put her out, and she's awful in one of her tempers."

"But I have *always* washed baby myself," I said piteously.

"What does that signify? She'll do it much better than you can. She's had the charge of no end of children, and knows how to doctor them and everything. We had much better go."

My heart was full, but I did not argue the point any further. If I enraged Mrs. Raikes, what might she not do to revenge herself on my innocent baby when I was gone! So I only kissed little May, and prepared to quit the room.

"We're going now, Mrs. Raikes," said Miss Power, in a conciliatory tone. "Good-by; you'll let us have baby down-stairs as soon as she's dressed, won't you?"

"I shall take her down at the proper time, miss, you may be sure of that. And I'm very glad you *are* going, for the room seems to me in a regular muddle. We shall be more to rights to-morrow."

"Come along, Katharine, and we'll show you your room," exclaimed Blanche, as she and her sisters drew me again into the corridor.

The apartment prepared for my reception

was on the lower floor—a handsome room, but too large to be comfortable, to my fancy, for one solitary girl and her tiny baby.

"It is rather far from the nursery," I said, as we entered it. "Mrs. Raikes will have to wash and dress baby before she leaves my room in the mornings."

"How do you mean?"

"It would be a long way to carry her before she is dressed."

"Why, you're not going to have the child to sleep with you?"

"Oh, indeed I am! She has never slept out of my bed since she has been born!"

"Well, I don't think mamma expects it; and I fancy you will have to ask Raikes's leave. I hardly imagine she will like trotting up and down these staircases."

"But I *can't* have my baby taken from me like this!" I exclaimed in alarm. "We have never been separated. I cannot live without her. She is all I have got."

"Well, don't cry about it! I dare say it will come all right; only of course mamma has her notions on these matters, and Raikes will not be interfered with."

"Why couldn't they have left her to Jane?" I said, sobbing. I was thoroughly exhausted with my long journey and the tumult in my mind.

"Who is Jane?"

"My servant. She has always taken such care of baby, and she got on so nicely at Guildford."

"Well, I suppose mamma thought a more experienced nurse advisable. We naturally set great store by the child, as poor Hugh was the only son, you see, and—"

"Oh, yes, I know all that," I said despondently.

"And, in consequence, she belongs more to the name and the estates, as it were, than to you or to us. I am sure you have too much good sense not to see that. But I dare say, when mamma hears you want the baby to sleep with you, she will coax Raikes into giving in."

But this supposition proved perfectly groundless. Lady Power strenuously resented the idea of taking the baby away from Mrs. Raikes's care at night; and as for Mrs. Raikes herself, she said she had never heard of such a thing—that she wouldn't give in on the subject, not even to the Countess of Mulligan nor Lady Moore—and that, if the child was to be racketed about from one room to another after that fashion, she would rather not have the care of it at all. Whereupon my mother-in-law asserted that the baby would be ruined if Mrs. Raikes resigned her charge—that she had been chosen with Sir Thomas's perfect approbation—that she was paid fifty pounds a year—and it was only what was due to their eldest son's child, and the heiress to their estates, that the infant should be thoroughly well cared for, and reared by a woman of the worth and experience of Mrs. Raikes.

And so I gave in. In a very few minutes it was decided that the baby was not to sleep any longer with me.

I resigned her with many tears, the last thing at night, to the care of her new nurse, and I cried myself to sleep afterward on my lace-frilled but lonely pillow. I dare say it was very childish and very silly of me; for there is no doubt that little May was tended like a queen, and that Mrs. Raikes was in every respect better fitted to look after her than Jane or myself. Still—though I was still her mother—all the *fun* of possessing her from that day seemed over. More—all the dignity and pride of ownership vanished with it too.

The temporary exaltation on which I piqued myself, and which had consoled me at Ivy Cottage for the insignificant position which, as a widow, I had assumed, was gone again. No one seemed to look up to me or envy me at Gentian's Cross for being baby's mother. On the contrary, my child became the centre of observation and remark, and I was treated—like anybody else. Even on the rare occasions when Mrs. Raikes thought it necessary to appeal to anybody on the subject of the baby's drives, or walks, or dress, she did not appeal to me, but to Lady Power.

From the time I entered the house to the hour I left it, I had no more to do with my own child than Jane had—poor Jane!—who, before she had been there a month, was so uncomfortable that she gave me notice to leave. Mrs. Raikes used, certainly, to

baby down-stairs at stated periods, and I generally kept her in my arms all the time, devouring her with kisses; but, when I visited the nursery, it was in the character of a guest, and I soon found that to give a hint or make a suggestion was to ruffle Raikes's temper for the day. My child was always exquisitely dressed, and grew and throve remarkably well. She became a great pet, too, with her aunts; and Sir Thomas and Lady Power noticed her progress with satisfaction, and generally had her down to exhibit with much ceremony to their friends. But they never exhibited *me*. A passing "*This is Mrs. Power*," or "*Allow me to introduce my daughter-in-law*," was all the compliment they paid to baby's mother; and I crept about the big house in my black dress, looking as much like a school-girl as ever, and rather subjected to being snubbed by my sisters-in-law than not.

I do not say that they were actively unkind to me, for that would not be true; but they were indifferent, which is perhaps harder to bear, because more difficult to cope with. They had their own pleasures and pursuits, and they did not invite nor wish me to share in them. They expected me, doubtless, to carve out pleasures and pursuits for myself, but I had not the heart or energy to do so. Could I have had the range of all those beautiful grounds and gardens, and been allowed to roam about them with my dear baby in my arms, I should have been perfectly happy, and desired nothing more. But the etiquette of Gentian's Cross did not permit of roving about at lawless hours, and Lady Power was almost as shocked as Mrs. Raikes (not quite) at the idea of my taking upon myself the duties of a nursemaid. And although I used to manage to circumvent Raikes as she left the house to take baby for a walk, and insist upon accompanying her, it always happened somehow that little May was asleep, and must not be disturbed, or had just had her meal, and must not be excited—any excuse, in fact, to prevent my crumpling or otherwise mismanaging those splendid robes, and mantles, and hoods, of which, I verily believe, Mrs. Raikes thought a great deal more than she did of baby. *It was lovely summer* weather, and I should have liked to have been out-of-doors all day, tossing about my little one among the buttercups and daisies, and teaching her how to laugh and crow, and use those sturdy little limbs that already rebelled against the irksome confinement of long robes. But Mrs. Raikes would as soon have let me play ball with her sacred charge. She *did* let us have a romp together occasionally, when baby was undressed for the night, and I sometimes thought that even Mrs. Raikes pitied me for my youth, and loneliness, and widowhood; and it was such moments that kept my life in me, and made me able to bear up against the oppression of feeling that assailed me whenever I was in the drawing-room.

Can I explain myself? No one was unkind to me, but still less was anybody kin. Sir Thomas treated me much as if I were one of the family; but I never felt akin to any of them.

For me, there was no one in the wide world but baby and myself, and I grew to love baby more and more every day.

At last I began to hear great talk about the ceremony of the christening. Lord and Lady Claretown were expected the beginning of the week, and Mrs. Delancey (the sister, Juliet, of whom my Hugh used to speak to me) was to arrive at the same time. Her name struck a chill to my heart whenever I heard it mentioned. I dreaded meeting her; for it was at her house where he had gone in my behalf, and because of my disobedience, that my Hugh had met with his death. I always called him "*my Hugh*," now, in my own thoughts, and to others. Lady Power had heard me use the term with a toss of the head, but I didn't mind. He seemed so completely forgotten, so unmourned at Gentian's Cross, that I took a secret delight in calling him mine before the world, lest it might class me in the category of those who disregarded his dear memory. There was a full-length oil-painting of him hung in the dining-room, and at first I had been quite unable to look at, or even sit opposite to it, it affected me so deeply. had been taken but a couple of years before and represented him standing by his horse, with one hand twisted in the animal's ma-

There was a look of life about the picture—a joyous expression in the bright eye, and speaking mouth, as if he were just about to step down and join the party assembled beneath him—just about to say, "Here I am, my darling Katie! Whatever made you think that I was dead?" And to the last it was agony to me to look at it. The first occasion on which I saw it (and the Powers had quite unprepared me for the shock) I thought I was going to faint with the emotion it called forth, but I recovered myself, and steadily kept my eyes turned in another direction until the meal on which I was engaged was ended. But when the family had separated for the night, and gone into their respective rooms, I crept down-stairs again with a flickering candle in my hand, and held the light up to the dear, familiar face, and gazed and gazed my fill. I thought I could be very calm and quiet, but, as I turned to go, the thought of leaving him, with that sweet, bright smile upon his face, alone in the darkness, as I had left him alone in the grave, struck on me like a sudden knell, and, dropping the candlestick I knew not where, I flung myself passionately into a seat and sobbed my heart out. And who should find me in that position but Sir Thomas Power, who happened to be passing in the hall? He did not say much as he conducted me back to my room; but I don't think he liked me the less for my temporary weakness. The next time we dined in that room, however, a silk curtain shaded the picture of my darling, and I liked it better so. I often crept in alone and mounted on a chair to gaze at his dear, boyish face, but I always drew the curtain close again, and was glad to think that he did not seem to smile on all the world while my heart was breaking.

But I had another portrait of him in my room that I did not hide away, and that I cherished above all my earthly possessions, except his baby. It was a photograph which he had had taken for me in Paris as a wedding present, and which had been uncompleted at the time of his death. Never shall I forget the feelings with which I received that likeness from the photographer's hands. My Hugh had been dead four months then (for the artist had not hurried himself), and the familiar look of his face was beginning (just a very little) to fade from my girlish memory. I opened the box in which his gift arrived, pulled the packing-paper off the morocco case, opened it, and received a shock still greater than the one which subsequently assailed me on seeing the oil-painting in the dining-hall at Gentian's Cross. For four months I had been thinking of my Hugh in the grave; for four months weeping over my last memory of him, lying cold, and grand, and beautiful, like sculptured marble, on his death-bed.

And here he appeared before me alive and smiling, in a brown-velvet coat, with one leg thrown carelessly over a chair, a cigar in his hand, a felt wideawake slouched over his face.

Oh! it is such moments as these that sprinkle gray hairs in our heads, and carve wrinkles on our brows. For days I had been unable to reopen that morocco case; then I had crept up to it again, and little by little nerved myself to bear the sight it contained, until it had become my greatest joy to gaze at it, and talk to it, and lay it under my pillow at night, that the first thing I might look at with each coming day might be my darling's face. And from that time I never knelt down to say my prayers (and since my baby's birth I had begun to pray) without that picture clasped in my raised hands. And though I am an old woman now, and many emotions have had possession of my breast since that period—emotions strong enough to obliterate my early sorrow, or make it stingless—yet I still retain the old custom, and, when my prayers ascend to Heaven (as I humbly trust they do), they are breathed over the portrait of my dear, boyish lover, whom I believe to be watching over me still, and pleading with the Eternal Father for our happy reunion in another world.

CHAPTER XIV.

MY CHILD'S AUNT.

I WAS sitting in my own room one afternoon in June, pondering over these things—indeed, I had my Hugh's portrait in my hand at the moment—when a soft tap sounded on the panels of my door. I said "Come in" mechanically. Unless it had been Mrs. Raikes with the baby (and I had just left her fast asleep in the nursery), there was no one whom I cared to see. I do think I was as lonely at that period as it was possible for a girl to be.

At the sound of my voice the door was quickly opened; a lady, dressed in cloak and bonnet, stood upon the threshold.

I glanced at her, and started to my feet.

Hugh's eyes—Hugh's hair—above all, Hugh's bright expression, were before me!

"Oh! who are you?" I cried, in amazement.

"You don't know me," she answered, smiling. "I am Juliet—Mrs. Delancey. I have just arrived."

I knew she was expected with Lord and Lady Claretown, and, with my usual shyness, had secreted myself up-stairs, to avoid meeting them as long as possible; but I felt no shyness now. Mrs. Delancey was holding out her arms to me, and I flew into them, and put up my face to hers, and clung to her as if she had been my mother. She was almost old enough to be.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "you are so like him—you *are* so like him!"

"Am I, dear? Most people thought we resembled each other; but I did not think that you could see it."

"But look here," I said, as I exhibited the portrait. "There he is just as he was to the last. And your eyes and hair are exactly the same."

Mrs. Delancey was visibly affected as she looked at her brother's picture.

"Poor, dear boy! Poor, darling boy!" she kept on repeating, with quivering lips. "I did love him so, Katie. I loved him *better than all the rest*; and I think he loved me, *too.*"

"I am sure he did," I responded, eagerly, "he so often spoke of his sister Juliet to me. He always said you were his favorite. He used to call you the jolliest girl in the world."

"My poor Hugh! O Katie, what a sad thing it was that he should die! And just as he was married, too. And you, my poor child! what a baby you look to have gone through so much trouble!"

"I am sixteen," I answered, sobbing.

"Sixteen! Only two years older than my eldest boy; and you have a child of your own."

"Oh, yes; such a darling! Just like my Hugh," I said, through my tears.

"How you must love her, Katie!"

"She is all I have to love. I have no father or mother, or brother or sister. I have no friends—nothing now but my baby."

"Don't say that, Katie. I will be your sister, or your mother, or anything you like to call me. Don't say you have no friends, child. Look on me as a friend, for I love you dearly for his sake."

"Oh, why didn't you come before?" I said, as we embraced each other fondly. "I have been so miserable here."

"Miserable! why, how is that?"

"They won't let me have my baby," I said, convulsively. "They have given her to Mrs. Raikes, and I never can see her or nurse her except when she chooses; and it is so lonely at night—and Jane has gone away from me—and—"

Mrs. Delancey looked very grave.

"Look here, dear," she said, kindly; "we won't discuss these points now, because I have only just arrived; but we will have a long talk about them afterward, and you must treat me just like a sister, and tell me everything. I wish I had been here before, Katie. But it was impossible; I have only just returned from abroad. After the sad occurrences of last year, I took my children away for change of air, and we came home last month."

"I wish you had written to me," I said, regretfully.

"I wish I had, dear. It was a foolish sort of feeling that prevented me. I had heard so little of you, and that little led me

to expect to find you so different from what you seem. And then I fancied you were with your own friends, and did not care about making our acquaintance."

"Lady Power must have told you that," I remarked.

She did not answer me.

"Mrs. Delancey—" I recommenced.

"Don't call me that, darling. Call me Juliet."

"Oh, how kind you are!" I said, as the once-familiar appellation broke on my ear. "No one has called me 'darling' since he died."

"My poor love!"

"I am only a girl, I know," I went on, with my face buried on her neck, "and I am awfully ignorant, and I used to be very wild; but I never thought when I married Hugh that I should do him any harm."

"I am sure you didn't, dear," she said, soothingly.

"I thought it would be such fun to run away and be married. And then I loved him very much, you know—dearer than anything I have every loved, except the baby. And he said it would be all right; but if I had known his people would be so angry about it—"

"They are not angry now, dear. It is all forgotten."

"Oh, no, it isn't! I can see it isn't, and I remind them of it, and it makes me wretched. They love the baby because she belongs to Hugh, and she is to have all their money by-and-by. But they would like me to be dead and out of the way; and sometimes, Juliet, I feel as if I would like it, too."

"Katie, I can't have you talk in this way. I assure you you are totally mistaken. My father and mother are not very demonstrative people, I know; and my sisters have lived so long by themselves that I think they have become rather selfishly inclined. Still, I am sure they are all disposed to like you and to pity you. It was rather a disappointment at the time to all of us, you know, dear Katie," she went on, softly, as she caressed my hanging hair; "and had dear Hugh lived I dare say there would have been a serious quarrel about his marriage with you, because there is no doubt it was very imprudent and ill-advised. But, since God saw fit to take him, it is all over now, and there is nothing more to be said about it. And you must not fancy my parents cherish any resentment against you. They are not likely to do so on the child's account, if not your own. They seem very proud of the child. By-the-way, do send for her. I long to see my new niece."

".We shall have to go up to the nursery, then," I answered, rising; "for Mrs. Raikes won't let baby come down-stairs, except at stated hours."

"What! not when you send for her? I never heard of such a thing. Why do you submit to it, Katie?"

"How can I help it? Lady Power says Raikes must not be interfered with."

"But you are the child's mother! You have surely a right to see her whenever you choose."

"I used to think so; but I don't like to make a fuss," I answered mournfully. "O Juliet! I wish you would speak to Lady Power about it. You don't know how unhappy I have been without my baby. I want to have her always, as I did at Guildford—to talk to her about Hugh, so that the first thing she may remember learning is her father's name. I have called her after him," I added in a more cheerful tone.

"So I have heard, dear. Well, let us make a pilgrimage to the nursery now, at all events, and I will see if I can get a few of these little disagreeables altered for you. You have not been open enough with my mother, Katie. She would hardly worry you for nothing in this way."

"I know I am very silly," I whispered, as Mrs. Delancey wound her arm about my waist.

"I am sure you are very dear," she answered, as she stooped to kiss me.

The visit to the nursery was a great success. Mrs. Raikes, who had lived in my sister-in-law's family, drew in her horns directly she saw who was my companion, and could not find words enough in which to praise the mental and physical qualities of my baby. Mrs. Delancey acquiesced in her good opinion, but paid her no compliment on the subject whatever. All the admira-

she bestowed on little May she addressed to me.

"She does you credit, Katie," she said, as she lifted my bouncing baby in her arms.

"Fancy her being only four months old! Why, my youngest was not so big as this at six months—was she, Raikes?"

"I don't think she was, madam, and she was a fine little lady, too. But this child is over-sized."

"Just like her dear father. He was one of the finest young fellows I ever saw. She has his eyes, too, Katie!"

"I am so glad you see it," I said excitedly; "for Lady Power says they will turn brown like mine. But I'm sure they are Hugh's. So is her mouth, and the shape of her face! My bonnie child! Whom should she be like, if not like him."

And, as little May chuckled in my face, I caught her from Juliet's arms and covered her with kisses.

"It almost seems absurd to see you together, and think you are her mother. Mrs. Power looks ridiculously young to have a baby, doesn't she, Raikes?"

"Oh! I have seen ladies look no older with their first," replied Mrs. Raikes. "And, so long as you have a good, experienced nurse, it don't much matter."

"But Mrs. Power had the entire charge of her child for the first three months—the most anxious time to look after a baby. I think it's wonderful she got on so well. Katie, I suppose she was the first child you had ever handled?"

"Quite the first," I said, laughing. "No one would ever trust me to nurse them before. But it's all very easy to do when you do it for your own child."

"You seem to have found it easy. However, I dare say you are very glad of Raikes's assistance now. She's an excellent aide-de-camp in the nursery, as I have reason to say, and takes wonderful care of her children. I don't think you ever close more than one eye at a time when you have an infant in bed with you, Raikes."

"I never spare myself trouble night nor day to do 'em justice, madam," replied Raikes, who was rather offended by the light tone of the conversation.

"I am sure you don't, and that Mrs. Power will acknowledge it as freely as I do. Baby is to be christened next week, I hear, Katie. What is the christening robe like?"

"I don't know! I haven't seen it," I replied vaguely.

"*I* can show it to you, madam," said Mrs. Raikes, as she opened a drawer in the wardrobe.

There it lay, in all its glory of Valenciennes lace and white satin, looking like the bridal dress of a fairy queen.

"Oh, how beautiful!" I exclaimed, involuntarily. "Baby, darling, you will look like a little princess, and poor mother won't know her child in all that finery."

"Why, it is dear Hugh's christening robe," said Mrs. Delancey, as she lifted part of the fabric in her hand.

All my gayety vanished.

"Is it?" I said solemnly, as I knelt down and raised it to my lips. "Why didn't they tell me of it before? Why didn't they show it to me?"

"Her ladyship gave no orders that I was to show the robe to any one," remarked Mrs. Raikes.

"You might have guessed she would wish Mrs. Power to see it, since it belongs to her child!" exclaimed my sister-in-law angrily.

"Her ladyship gave me no orders on the subject," repeated Mrs. Raikes.

"We must see all this altered," said Juliet, as she prepared to go; but I am not sure if Mrs. Raikes heard her. "Come, Katie dear! Leave your little beauty for a few minutes, and help me to lay aside my traveling things. And Lord and Lady Claretown are down-stairs, too, waiting to be introduced to you. Good-by, you sweet baby, for the present! We will have a grand romp with you this evening. Come, dear Katie!" And, without another look at the indignant Raikes, my dear new sister threw her arm round my figure, and drew me affectionately from the room.

CHAPTER XV.

"HUGH MARY FRANCES GEORGINA."

THE greater evils of my artificial life were modified after Mrs. Delancey's arrival at Gentian's Cross. She was so completely a practical woman of the world; she had been for so many years a wife and mother and the responsible head of a large establishment, that her authority carried weight with it, and even Lady Power succumbed to her dictation. As for the servants, they were nowhere. The great Doran hardly ventured to make a remark in her presence; and butter would not have melted in the mouth of the majestic Mrs. Raikes whenever Juliet visited the nursery. The first good effects of her influence made me foolishly happy. My baby was given back to me at night. It is true that the indignant nurse used to bring the sleeping bundle to me every evening with a face as black as thunder, and, while she was unrolling my infant from innumerable flannels to place her by my side, give vent to invidious remarks concerning her own irresponsibility as to the child catching her "death of cold."

I heard them, but I did not care. My arms were trembling with eagerness to hold my baby again, and when I saw the downy little head nestled on my bosom I was blissfully content. Mrs. Raikes might bounce about the room, and rattle the milk-jug and the feeding-bottle, and slam the door, and do all in her power to wake up little May, and set her crying, that she might have an opportunity for proving that she had been right, and everybody else wrong; but I was too happy even to remonstrate with her behavior. I folded my arms tight round my baby, and put my lips on her soft little crown, and felt that I had the world in my embrace. It was not an extravagant nor a dissipated pleasure, that of purring one's self to sleep with delight at the close contiguity of one's own child; but Juliet, in procuring me this innocent and natural enjoyment, made me feel for the time being as though I had no wish left to be gratified. Long before the usual hour arrived for the solemn lighting of chamber candlesticks and the interchange of good-nights, I used to steal away from the grand drawing-room to my own apartment, that I might have the delight of ringing my bell for Raikes to bring my treasure and lay her in my arms. And, long after the household supposed that I was wrapped in sleep, would I lie, waking, but happy, listening with silent adoration to the peaceful breathing of my child. Then the waking on those glorious summer mornings! How sweet it was to be roused by my baby's note of warning! Not a cry, nor a coo, but a little sound of impatience as though, waking first, she wondered greatly why my eyes were not also open. And I would start to find two large blue-gray orbs, like wood-violets steeped in dew, staring at me, half frightened, half expectant. But when, with consciousness, the love and the life came back to mine, and a smile with it, little May's face would change to joy, and she would laugh and coo, while her fat, dimpled hands, pink like the heart of a rose, grabbed at my cambric frills and hanging hair. What fun we used to have in bed in the mornings, my baby and I! What games of bo-peep behind the pillows—what tickling matches on toes and fingers—what long, long, loving kisses—what conversations about nothing at all, in language that nobody could understand! And then, silly little girl that I was! and yet how often have I longed since that that sweet silly time were back again—I would draw my Hugh's picture from beneath my pillow, and open the case, and hold it up before the baby's eyes, and try to teach her (at four months old, remember) to say "Hugh!"

I wonder how often I went through that farce, dividing my conversation between the sweet pictured face upon the cardboard and his innocent representative upon the pillow—the one, an unconscious infant; the other, a silent memory, each in its way so totally unable to respond to my warm, loving words, and yet the two that made up the sum total of my poor existence. To me it was the most natural idea to talk to both of them; but I fancy that, could any one have overheard me, the little comedy would have appeared almost as pathetic as it was now

But what can you expect of the combined efforts of sixteen years and four months? The one was almost as much a baby as the other!

The christening-day arrived. I cannot say that I had taken much interest in it. To me, my child was already a Christian, and bore all the names I desired her to have. But the actual ceremony was evidently invested with a great deal of importance in the eyes of the Power family, and the preparations made for it were immense.

Lord and Lady Claretown, the accepted sponsors, appeared polished and amiable people, and they were always very friendly in their intercourse with me; but, as I whispered to Juliet, I would much rather that *she* had been going to stand godmother to my child, and I was sure that Hugh would have preferred it also. She gave me a squeeze and a kiss in return for the compliment, but she talked seriously to me of the advantages May would derive from possessing such aristocratic sponsors.

"Advantages which, my dear Katie, you don't seem to me to be fully aware of. You cannot too soon accept the fact that your child, in point of position, is not an ordinary child. She has been born to great wealth, and great responsibility, and the more friends we can secure, to help her to live up to the position she must assume in the future, the better."

"She will have you and me," I said, ruefully.

"My dear girl, if baby inherits her grandfather's property, she will want more than you and me. She will take a very high place among the county families, and should marry a man of rank, and title, and influence. She will be the greatest match in the country. She mustn't be allowed to go to anything under a peer."

The idea of the baby being married made me laugh, yet I was more inclined to cry.

"I hate the thought of the money," I said, vehemently. "I wish there was none at all, or that baby was not to have it. It seems just as if she didn't belong to me."

"Don't talk like that, Katie; it's selfish. If dear Hugh had lived he would have had both title and money. The former must go to my uncle's eldest son, but it is only fair Hugh's child should have the wealth and bestow it worthily. My parents look on little May as the hope of the family. We must try and second their efforts to make her all they wish. And the first thing toward it is to create an interest in her with such people as Lord and Lady Claretown. They have no children of their own, and will probably take an affection for their godchild, particularly as they knew and liked poor Hugh."

"And *I* am to be nothing, then?" I said mournfully.

"You are her mother, Katie. You can be nothing higher or more near. It is your part to see that no one comes between you. If you wish to keep your child's highest love (as of course you should), see that your affection never fails for her."

These words sank deep into my heart. I pondered over them, and magnified the dangers in prospect for my child, until I began to fancy that all the world was in league to take her from me, and that my mission was to do battle for her affection. I pictured to myself May, grown up, beautiful, stately, and accomplished, turning from her poor little half-educated, dowdy mother, to seek the company of all the lords and ladies of the land, until I trembled at the prospect of what lay before me, and longed to take her in my arms and run away where nobody could ever find us again, so that she might grow up to believe in me as the first person in the world. I grew suspicious and uneasy. I saw, in every act of kindness to my baby, a trap to catch her love, and wean her from me. She was my own and not my own, and I chafed under the thralldom from which I had no means of escaping. The christening-day was a day of torment to me. I don't know why, but, notwithstanding the horses and carriages, the dresses, the sponsors, and all the rest of the grandeur, I quite expected to have been allowed to carry my own child in my own arms to church. But Lady Power's look when I suggested the idea was more than surprised—it was indignant.

"I am astonished at your ignorance, Katharine. How came you to think of such a thing? You appear to have totally forgot-

ten you are not of the same faith as ourselves. You can come to church, of course, if you have any interest in seeing the ceremony performed; but were the archbishop to see you holding the child he would naturally be very much surprised."

"I really don't see why she shouldn't hold it, mamma," observed Juliet quietly.

"My dear Juliet! you are so very strange sometimes. You forget Katharine is not one of us. What possible difference can it make, to her, who presents our dear infant at the font? I should have thought it was quite against her principles even to accompany us to church; though, of course, if she wishes it—"

"Of course I wish it!" I said stoutly. "I wouldn't let baby go without me. And I don't care what she is, Protestant or Catholic, it's all the same to me; nothing can unmake her my own child."

"Hush, Katie dear!" interposed my sister-in-law. "You've been awfully good in giving in about the name and everything else. Don't mar the enjoyment of what ought to be a day of thankfulness by disputing a matter of so little consequence as who shall carry the baby."

"Very good," I answered, "Lady Claretown can carry her if she likes."

"Raikes is the proper person to carry her," said my mother-in-law grandly; "Lady Claretown's services will be otherwise required."

So my beautiful baby, looking a perfect picture in her white-satin and lace robes, was conveyed to church in a carriage drawn by gray horses, on the lap of the pompous Mrs. Raikes, while the sponsors followed with Lady Power, and I went in humbly, last of all, in company with my sisters-in-law.

Arrived in church, I felt my utter insignificance and unimportance worse than before. I was like a blind man taken to see a show; a deaf man at a concert of music. I saw my baby presented to the archbishop, while Lord and Lady Claretown stood on either side with their hands upon her, and Sir Thomas and Lady Power crowded behind, and my sisters-in-law with other guests brought up the rear; and I stood outside the circle and saw nothing more. I heard the archbishop and the attendant priest read a service in Latin, and I knew they were doing something that my baby didn't like, because she began to cry in the middle of the proceedings and never left off again until the end. But that was all; and I felt sulky and out in the cold, and when the rest of the party knelt to pray I was rebellious and remained standing.

I saw one of the priests—an old man with white hair and a very benignant countenance—glance at me kindly and sorrowfully; but my heart felt hard, and I would not kneel. My baby's name was pronounced over her in Latin, but I detected it.

"Hugh Mary Frances Georgina."

I set my teeth as the last two words left the archbishop's lips. It was as though they sealed my child the property of the Claretowns and the Powers. Oh! I was wicked on that blessed christening-day! May God forgive me! When the ceremony was concluded and the party adjourned to the sacristy to sign the register, Mrs. Raikes presented my child to the sponsors and its grandparents to kiss.

"The darling! she's a true child of the Church now," exclaimed Lady Power, as she stooped to embrace her.

"Sweet little lamb! sweet little Frances! You must forgive me, my dear friend; but I fear I shall never think of her except by my own name," said Lady Claretown.

"I hope you never will," replied my mother-in-law warmly. "Indeed I always intended to call her Frances, having a Georgina of my own already."

My heart boiled within me. I was trembling from head to foot. Mrs. Raikes, either unintentionally or by design, appeared to be about to pass me over altogether. Mrs. Delancey recalled her to her duty.

"Bring the baby here, Raikes. You have forgotten her mamma.—Come, Katie dear, you ought to have been the first to kiss the little Christian."

I pretended to smile, but I could not speak. I only patted the baby's cheek and said pointedly,

"Dear little May! Mother's own little May!" and turned away to leave the sacristy.

"Now, Mrs. Raikes!" cried Lady Power, as though the child were, soul and body, her own property; and in the same order as we had gone to church did we return to Gentian's Cross, where a splendid breakfast was awaiting us.

We sat down to a large company, the archbishop and numerous relations of the Power family (to many of whom I was a complete stranger) having been invited to join us. The christening presents—among which were a gilt mug and pap-boat, a magnificent set of coral, an illuminated missal, a knife, fork, and spoon, and various other articles as useless as they were expensive—were spread out at one end of the breakfast-table, and many were the comments I heard passed upon them, on the huge christening cake, covered with white flowers, which adorned the centre, and on the baby herself, her robes, her beauty, and her intelligence. But not a soul asked after the mother of my child, or complimented me on her possession. I don't think half the guests assembled there knew who I was, nor even cared to ask. I sat by the side of my sister Juliet, a bunch of white roses in my bosom, the only relief I had consented to give my mourning garments—a blot among the pink, and blue, and green dresses that rustled and fluttered around me. Sir Thomas, in returning thanks for the manner in which the baby's health had been drunk, did make some allusion to me as her mother, and the pleasure which he felt certain I had taken in the demonstration; and then a few eyes turned for a moment upon me, and a girl who sat just opposite exclaimed, "Are you really the baby's mother? Oh, how nice! I had no idea of it, you look so young!" And then it was over, and I sank back into my former obscurity.

Only once more was I roused from my inward longing to get away from the breakfast-table and seek my child, and that was when the archbishop rose to say a few words about the ceremony we had just witnessed. He alluded to my darling Hugh, remarked what a subject for gratitude it was that, *though he was taken away*, he had left a *child behind him to be* reared in the same *holy faith to which his ancestors* had always belonged, and went on to say he trusted that, by God's blessing, that child would grow up to tread in the steps of her forefathers, and to cling as closely to the Church into which she had just been received as he felt assured her father—whom he had held in his arms at the font, as he had done her that day—would have done. There was a great-deal of emotion displayed at the archbishop's speech. Sir Thomas was visibly affected; Lady Power and Lady Claretown wiped their eyes more than once; and poor Juliet, sitting by my side, sobbed aloud. *Yet I did not shed a tear.* *I* who had loved him as none of them ever could or did—I who, to my irreparable loss, had watched him die—I who had brought his child into the world—I, under this touching allusion to him, remained silent and unmoved. There were greater feelings at work in my bosom at that moment than even love or grief. I was burning with indignation—indignation that they could speak of the loss of him who was all the world to me, and not remember my great anguish—and trembling with fear—fear at what this complete ignoring of my claims upon Hugh's child portended. I was sick at heart and miserable; and at last Juliet perceived my condition and smuggled me out of the room. They did not miss me, you may depend on it; the mother of the heiress of Gentian's Cross was too insignificant a personage to cause a gap at that great table. As soon as the solemn effect produced by the archbishop's allusion to Hugh's death had passed over, the laughter and jesting and feasting went on as vigorously as before, while I sat up in the nursery, and tried to forget my trouble by playing with little May. There, just before the first dressing-bell rang for dinner, I was found by my mother-in-law and Lady Claretown.

"Oh! Katharine, are you there?" exclaimed the former, as though it were an unprecedented thing that I should be in my own child's nursery. "Lady Claretown and I have come to bid our little beauty good-night.—How well she behaved in church, Raikes! She has a sweet temper, like all my children."

"That she have, my lady. So have Mrs. Delancey's young ladies and gentlemen, all

he best of tempers, as I've said over and over gain."

"Ah! I know nothing about them. Juliet's children are Delanceys, but this little one is a Power. Well, Miss Frances," she continued, taking the child in her arms, 'and how do you like your new names?"

"Very much, grandmamma," exclaimed Lady Claretown, pretending to make the child reply; "but I always mean to be called Frances, after my own godmamma who loves me so much."

Lady Power laughed at this ebullition as though it had been the rarest wit. I wouldn't laugh.

"So you shall, my pet," she said, addressing the child; "but we mustn't stay any longer, or we shall be late for dinner. I should think, Katharine, it must be time you were changing your dress."

"I do not wish to go down to dinner this evening, thank you. I hate a large party."

"Yes! How strange! Not used to it, I suppose. Well, good-night, dear baby!"

"Good-night, you sweet godchild!" echoed Lady Claretown, effusively. "Take great care of her for me, Mrs. Raikes. You don't know how sharp I am going to look after you now."

"I trust your ladyship will never have occasion to find fault with me," said Raikes, with a smirk. "I'll take good care of the dear child; your ladyship may depend upon me for that; and I hope she'll grow up to be a credit and a pride to you—that I do."

"I shall do my best to accomplish it, you may be sure," replied Lady Claretown. "By-the-by, that reminds me I have brought a holy-water stoup to hang over her bed. You must be sure and use it for her, night and morning, Mrs. Raikes, until she is old enough to do so herself."

And Lady Claretown produced a beautiful little figure in painted china of an angel holding a shell. I glared at it jealously. Here was something again in which I had no part.

Lady Power and Mrs. Raikes were loud in their expressions of admiration for the *workmanship of the little bénitier*. I looked on *and said nothing.*

"It *is* pretty," replied Lady Claretown, "but not half pretty enough for my godchild. Mind it hangs over her cot, Raikes."

"But the little lady sleeps with her mamma, at present," observed the nurse grimly.

"And I can't have it over *my* bed," I retorted rudely. I am very sorry for it now.

"Oh! ah!" said Lady Claretown. "Well, it must hang in the nursery, then, till baby sleeps by herself; and you can use it for her all the same, nurse."

"Your ladyship's wishes shall be carried out to the letter," replied Raikes pompously; "and everything that *I* can teach the dear child she shall learn. The Blessed Virgin help her, poor innocent lamb!"

I knew the last aspiration was breathed for little May because she had a Protestant mother; and so did the ladies. They sighed audibly, embraced the child again, and, with a curt good-night to me, left the room.

Wicked spirits were raging in me that evening, and I distorted even acts of kindness into injuries. As my mother-in-law and Lady Claretown left the room I advanced to the mantel-piece, on which lay the newly-presented holy-water stoup, and lifted it for examination.

"Isn't it beautiful!" exclaimed Mrs. Raikes; "so natural like, and such a heavenly look. Miss Frances is in luck to-day."

"I'll thank you to speak of the child by her proper name," I said, tartly. "I have told you she is to be called Miss May."

"Well, her ladyship gives quite a different order," replied the nurse, insolently.

"I don't care what her ladyship says or doesn't say. The child is mine, and I have a right to choose her name. At all events, you will never mention her before me except as Miss May."

I had never yet presumed to speak so authoritatively to her, and Mrs. Raikes was quite taken by surprise.

"I never heard such chopping and changing before," she grumbled. "What with one person and another person, and one name and another name, I don't know if I'm standing on my head or my heels."

"I suppose you know who is the child's mother?" I said, grandly.

"Oh! yes, ma'am, of course; and I've no wish to interfere myself, but her ladyship's very particular, and I'm living on her wages; so when she and Lady Claretown—"

"What's Lady Claretown to me!" I exclaimed indignantly, as I swept my arm off the mantel-piece where it had been resting. The movement was fatal to the holy-water stoup, which came down with a crash and was smashed in the fender.

"O Lor'! now that *was* an ill-natured thing to do!" exclaimed Mrs. Raikes, in her odiously-familiar manner. "A stoup as must have cost a couple of pounds if it cost a shilling—and when I had just promised her godmamma to use the holy-water night and morning!"

"What nonsense!" I cried angrily, and without condescending to explain it had been an accident. "As if it would do her any good! I'm very glad the stupid thing is broken. I never heard such rubbish in my life."

I was not speaking the truth; for, if I had not learned to believe in my dead Hugh's religion, I had too much reverence for it and for him to disbelieve.

But rage had taken possession of me. My poor childish heart was smarting under a sense of injury and neglect, and I was ready to fight against anything that threatened to raise a barrier between me and the child of my affections. Have you not often seen some poor dumb mother—a dog or cat, perhaps—when the children of the family come to handle and admire her newly-born litter of puppies or kittens? How the poor brute trembles with anxiety as each blind, squealing baby is lifted from the basket—how her meek eye follows the rough hand that suspends her treasure in mid-air—how uneasily she whines (or mews) in answer—how plainly she implores for it to be restored to her! She knows well enough her master will not hurt her little one. She believes that he is more powerful than herself—better able, perhaps, to take care of it. Yet she trembles—she knows not why—and the loving whine, or purr, with which she receives it back—the eagerness with which she curls her body right round it to conceal it from view—the happy, contented expression on her face as she looks up again—tell in a breath the miserable suspense she has gone through. I have often thought that my feelings (at the period of life of which I am now speaking) were very much like those of a dumb animal. The instinct of motherhood was strong within me, and I stood alone. There was no father to put his strong arm about my child and me, and tell us not to fear! I knew the Powers were better capable of rearing and providing for my baby than myself, and that, in a measure, she belonged to them; and I felt as if, day by day, she were slipping from my grasp into theirs.

Oh! I was miserable. I hardly know how to explain my feelings; but I was very miserable. The baby who had come to be such a joy to me was turning into a source of unhappiness and discontent. Even in her religion I was to be divided from her. Her nurses and godparents were to teach her to pray; her mother could not kneel in the same church, nor use the same prayers. Not that I thought much of one church over another, nor had any decided views on any subject; but I was in that frame of mind when everything fretted me, and I was ready to make an evil even out of the pretty present that Lady Claretown had given to my baby, and I had smashed, without remorse, upon the hearthstone. Mrs. Raikes professed to be horribly shocked at my profanity, and I was sorry for the words directly I had spoken them; but I was too angry and too proud to say I had been wrong, and quitted the nursery without further parley, leaving her to pick up the broken pieces of the angel holding out the shell.

CHAPTER XVI.

A RASH RESOLVE.

After-circumstances led me to believe that Mrs. Raikes repeated to her mistress what I had said and done relative to baby's name and the holy-water stoup, but Lady Power never alluded to the subject before me. Juliet did—and, as far as I was able, I

;ave her an explanation of my conduct; but ıer mother kept silence. Only her manners ;rew more distant toward me from that lay, and she was scrupulous in calling my nfant by the name she knew I disliked; while I as scrupulously clung to that of my own choice. It was a regular battle between us when the child appeared, who should address her first as "May," or "Frances." And that warfare raged till Lady Power's dying day.

The period of my sister Juliet's visit to Gentian's Cross was now drawing to a close, and I looked forward to her departure with dismay. She was the only one of Hugh's sisters to whom I had in the least felt drawn. Margaret and Blanche and Norah were simple nonentities.

But before that time arrived I had quite made up my mind, as I thought, to leave Ireland.

I was not decided where to go. Sometimes I thought of taking apartments near Juliet in London, or Aunt Tessie in Guildford. I would rather even have returned to the monotony and prosiness of Ivy Cottage than remained beneath the chilling and uncongenial influence of Gentian's Cross.

But, when I spoke of my intention to Mrs. Delancey, I was mortified and disappointed to find she was totally opposed to it. More than that, she appeared astonished at the idea, as if it were an impossibility; and I had so fully expected to receive her sympathy and advice, that the effect of my confidence took me completely by surprise.

"You couldn't do it, Katie," she said decisively. "It is absurd to think of such a thing. What would you do with that child, alone in lodgings?"

"But I shouldn't be alone: of course I should have a nurse for her."

"A servant is no companion or protector. You are too young to live by yourself. And what do you know of housekeeping?"

"I can learn."

"Nonsense! You must put the idea out of your head altogether. If you were wealthy, and could command proper chaperonage, and have a retinue of servants, it *might be different; but nothing* could justify *our leaving the shelter of* Gentian's Cross for furnished lodgings. My father wouldn't hear of it."

"But, Juliet, I can't live here always!"

"Why not? What is more natural than that you should make Hugh's house yours—particularly as your child is to inherit it? I am quite sure my parents would never consent to part with the baby, and I don't suppose you would like to leave her behind."

"Leave my baby behind! O Juliet! as if I could!"

"Just so. But don't you see the folly of taking her away? Here she is surrounded by every luxury and advantage, and will be reared as befits her station in life. In lodgings with you, she would not be likely to have the same attendance or comforts, and her health would in all probability suffer. But it is no use discussing the contingencies, because I am convinced my parents would never let her go. I don't think they ought."

"But, Juliet, that is the very thing that makes me so unhappy! My child seems to belong much more to them than to me."

"Poor, little Katie!" replied my sister-in-law, stroking my hair. "No, dear; that can never be. Don't fret yourself about that. But she does belong to Gentian's Cross, and Derry Lodge, and half a dozen other places; and it is only right, under the circumstances, that she should be brought up on her own property, and among her own people. Your faith, too, Katie, is a serious obstacle to your being allowed to bring up your child alone. How *could* you teach her properly, or set her a good example? I don't blame you for your religion, dear, remember, but we can't serve two masters. And, added to all this, Katie, I don't think you *can* take her away without my father's sanction."

"What do you mean? I have plenty of money—more than I should want."

"My poor child! you haven't a halfpenny that is legally your own. Dear Hugh had just come into his little property, but he died without making a will, and by rights it all passes to his sisters. We don't want it, remember, nor would we touch it; but still it is not yours, except by courtesy, and would be a strong weapon in my father's hand

you attempted to go against his wishes in this matter."

I was silent. I saw the meshes of the net closing around me.

"I could not speak so confidently in this matter, Katie dear," resumed my sister-in-law kindly, "had I not heard it discussed by my parents. They cannot help seeing you are not happy here, and I think they are sorry for it; but Hugh's child is naturally everything to them (what a pity it is she was not a boy, to inherit the title!), and they will go any lengths sooner than part with her to be brought up in a Protestant atmosphere. So long as you remain at Gentian's Cross, my father will be only too happy to continue your allowance; but, were you to propose leaving it with the child, I am afraid he would be inclined to refuse it. And then you would be penniless! And why should you wish to go, dear Katie? You are not so much of a stranger here as you were, and your baby is well cared for and happy, and every day things will improve. Try to look on it as your home, dear—at all events until you leave it for another."

"How *can* I leave it for another," I said savagely, "when you say I have not a halfpenny to buy bread with?"

"I meant *should* you ever wish to leave it for another, Katie. We have not, of course, been able to help contemplating such a contingency. You are so young still, dear—and you are growing so pretty—it is not likely you will remain here to the end of your days."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

I really did not know to what she alluded.

"I mean that, in all probability, you will marry again some day, and then, perhaps, you will not mind leaving dear baby as a legacy to papa and mamma."

"*Marry again!*" I cried, in a tone of disgust. "Marry again!—when Hugh—"

But here I broke down, and ended my rhapsody in a flood of tears. It was long before my sister-in-law could console me. To marry again!—to forget all about my darling boy lying cold and dead in his coffin *beneath the ground* of Père-la-Chaise, while *some other man called himself* my husband, and talked to me as Hugh had talked! Oh! it seemed too horrible!—too unnatural—too sacrilegious to my young innocent mind; and I had received a coarse shock from which it was some time before I recovered. And, when I did, it was to cling with still greater fervor to the idea of never parting with my precious child! I felt as if that was what the Powers had been trying to do all along! To disgust me with Gentian's Cross, and themselves, and everything concerning them, so that I might be glad to forget my dear dead love, and all his sweet ways and words, and to rush to the home of anybody else and leave my Hugh's child behind me! But no! no! no! They might do what they liked, but it was all useless! They should *never*, *never* make me false to my lost lover, nor to the child he had left behind him! So I told Mrs. Delancey, clinging to her and sobbing as if my heart would break. I think she was frightened at the storm which she had raised. I know she tried hard to console me; assured me over and over again that my fidelity to Hugh's memory would only endear me to his parents; and that the last thing they wished to do was to separate me from my baby. But she entreated me, therefore, for Hugh's sake, to try and be reconciled to the idea of living in the place where he was born, and where, if he were still cognizant of what passed on earth, she felt sure he would be glad to know that I was safe under the protection of his parents.

This argument had more effect on me than any other; and, though the conversation left me unhappy and unsettled, after a little while I did become reconciled to the idea of living at Gentian's Cross—and particularly as Juliet assured me that she should often be there herself, and made me promise, as soon as baby should be old enough to leave home, to pay her an annual visit in London.

She left Ireland; the guests who had been assembled during the fine weather dispersed; the autumn days began to close in; the family at Gentian's Cross was drawn more closely together—and then a new worry assailed me. I no longer felt such a stranger in their home circle; but I was still a stranger to their faith, and because

little May was not, the fact had power to gall me.

I could have borne very well to see my father and mother and sisters-in-law set off to attend mass every Sunday morning, while I walked by myself to pray in the white-washed barn that did duty for a Protestant church in that vicinity. It was not separation from them in such matters that disturbed my mind; it was the thousand and one little instances that took place at home, in which my child and their religion were coupled together, that made me long to be a Catholic. They would not dare to ignore me then as they did now (so I said to myself), nor to make arrangements for little May's future bringing-up without any reference to what I wished or approved of. This feeling was very strong on me soon after the christening. When Father Ferguson, who was the family director, paid his usual weekly call, I could not bear to see my baby brought down to him, and to hear the blessing pronounced on her from which I knew I was excluded. I chafed under a sense of injury at each fresh present, chiefly tokens of her faith, which her aunts or other relations made her. I could have smashed the images and pictures with which her nursery was adorned; and my indignation reached its height one day when Mrs. Raikes (who, like many of her class, was very superstitious) dipped a silver medal, which little May usually wore round her neck, into the holy-water stoup, because, in playing with the child, I had thrown the chain over my own head. I did not call out, as on a former occasion, that it was nonsense; but I walked out of the nursery, and went for a long ramble, sadly brooding on the division this circumstance of difference of faith might create in the future between my baby and myself. And it was during this walk that the question suggested itself to me, "Why should I not become a Catholic also?" As I have said before, I had no real feeling on the subject. It is true that, since my baby's birth, I had begun to use the habit of prayer, but it was more from an idea of duty than of pleasure; there was no religion in my heart. I was very ignorant on such matters, but I knew that Protestants did sometimes turn Catholics, because my Hugh had more than once spoken to me about it, even during the short time we were together.

And, perhaps, as strong a wish to be more closely united to my dead lover, as to my living child, urged me to the step I eventually decided on. Any way, I thought of and brooded on the subject for some days, until I arrived at what I conceived to be a grand and lofty resolution. I would become a Catholic!

I did not consult my mother nor sisters-in-law. That would have seemed to me a childish proceeding, unworthy of my age and dignity. No! what I intended to do was to keep the business quite secret until some day some allusion more than usually aggravating should be made to my religion, when I should majestically reply, "You are entirely mistaken in your surmises, for I am a Catholic like yourselves!"

I imagined Lady Power's look of mystified incredulity—her daughters' ridicule—and, finally, my own triumph when the truth was revealed. And, mingled with this, I fear, was not a little self-satisfaction at the idea that, however openly they might congratulate me on the event, they would secretly be much discomforted to think that thenceforth I might claim a voice in all matters of discussion relative to my baby's religious education.

Filled with this notion, I next began to consider how best to carry it out. I could not conceive there would be any difficulty. I had been reared in the belief that Roman Catholics were a species of roaring lions, going about and seeking whom they might devour; and that, very far from refusing or hesitating to receive members of any other sect into their Church, they were only too ready to drag them in by main force, and baptize them against their will; after which act they became completely in the power of the priests, and would be subjected to the most frightful persecution—indeed, made away with secretly, if they ever attempted to enter an alien place of worship again. I believed this, but it did not frighten me, for I knew, for my baby's sake, I should never wish even to be thought to be a Protestant. So, being well aware on

days the Power family usually frequented their church, I chose one on which I was not likely to encounter them, and walked in boldly to speak to Father Ferguson.

It was on a Friday in December, at about four o'clock in the afternoon. How well I remember the day! The church was lighted up for benediction; indeed, the service was going on as I arrived, and I had to wait till its conclusion. When it was ended, I was not ignorant where to find Father Ferguson, for I had accompanied my sisters-in-law to confession more than once, and knew the door by which they entered his confessional. As I closed it behind me my heart beat rather fast, still I had no doubt of the issue of my application. I knelt down by the perforated-zinc window which divided me from the priest, and said without hesitation:

"I am Mrs. Hugh Power—Katie, you know, Father Ferguson."

The father knew me well by name and sight, although he had not often spoken to me; but his voice did not express any surprise as he answered:

"Well, my daughter, and what do you want of me?"

"I want to be a Catholic. I want you to receive me into the Church. How soon can you do it?"

"This is rather a sudden resolution on your part, is it not?"

"Yes—no, I mean. I've wanted it for a long time. You *will* do it, won't you, father?"

"I must first hear some of your reasons, my child, for desiring to make so important a change."

"My reasons?" I stammered.

"Yes. How long is it since you desired to be a Catholic?"

"Ever since I came here, I think."

"And why do you wish it?"

"Oh, because of baby, father! I must be of the same religion as baby! and poor Hugh, too. I don't seem to belong to him, or to his people; and Lady Power is always saying—"

"Hush, my child! Tell me of yourself, *not of others. You have* been reared in the *Protestant faith, and you* wish to change it *for that of The Church*; not because you have, by God's grace, been convinced that it *is* The Church, but because your husband died in it, and your infant has been baptized into it. Am I right?"

"Yes, father," I answered, meekly.

"It is a laudable wish on your part to be able to instruct your child in the mysteries of her faith, and an affectionate wish to belong to that in which your husband died; but wishes are not sufficient to make you a Catholic, my daughter. For that purpose you must have nothing less than belief."

"But, if you baptize me, I shall be a Catholic, father."

"You will be a Catholic in name; but that is not enough for your salvation. Can you assure me that you believe the Catholic Church to be the one only Church founded by Jesus Christ during His sojourn upon earth?"

"Oh, yes!" I answered, without thinking, and only desirous to gain my end. "I would give anything to belong to It."

"If your child were a Protestant, you would give her up to enter the Catholic Church?"

I stopped and shuddered. I was not a liar. I could not answer "Yes."

"Well, my daughter?"

"Father Ferguson, how could I give up my child—my own child—the only thing that I have left?"

"And God?" he said, interrogatively.

"And God," I repeated, feeling dreadfully confused, and not knowing what he meant.

"What of Him? If this Church is His true Church, and He founded it, is He to come before your child, or after her?"

I saw my error on the moment.

"You are right," I answered. "I cannot be a Catholic."

"God forbid that I should say that, or think it! I trust in His mercy that you will at some future day (and that not a far distant one) be a Catholic. But you are not one now, my child; and, until by faith you are so, you must not dream of entering the Church."

Utterly dispirited, but told by conscience there was no alternative, I rose to go.

"I am so sorry I troubled you for nothing," I said, with conventional politeness.

"You have not troubled me for nothing," replied Father Ferguson. "I hope I shall see you often now, and talk with you upon the subject that interests you. By-the-way, may I ask what your father and mother-in-law say to your proposition?"

"I have not asked them, father."

"You have consulted no one but myself?"

"No one. I wanted to become a Catholic," I went on, regardless now whether he knew my motives or not, "because baby is one, and they always seem to think that I am nobody, and I shouldn't be able to teach her her prayers, or anything when she gets bigger, and it makes me miserable."

"You will not mind seeing me occasionally when I call at Gentian's Cross?" he demanded.

"Oh! no, father, of course not; that is, if you won't tell Lady Power I came here, will you?"

"I will not, since you wish it. But I should like to see you in my church now and then; and you will let me lend you a few little books that will explain to you the subject on which at present, if you will forgive my saying so, you are very ignorant."

"I will come when I can," I answered, alluding to his first request, "and I will read the books. But, father, you will not tell Lady Power, will you?"

"Are you afraid of Lady Power, my child?"

I nodded. He was silent. Then, after a pause, he said:

"The books I propose to lend you will, I trust, make clear to you how great a sin you would have been guilty of had you entered the Church, as you desired—without thought, or belief, or prayer—merely to gratify what may prove a passing wish to gain an ascendency over your child. What age is your child now?"

"Ten months. She has got four teeth," I added eagerly.

"Long before she is of an age to receive religious instruction, I trust you may be in a position to become her teacher," he said kindly. "With God's help, I will do all in my power *to make you so*. But we must *have truth before everything*—perfect truth and perfect trust—or our best endeavors will end in defeat. I will send you the books I spoke of, and I trust that the perusal of them may be blessed to you. When that time arrives, my child, come back to me, and I will welcome you with gladness. Until it arrives, pray—pray earnestly that the right path may be pointed out to you; but beware how you attempt to use God's means to effect your own will. And now you must go—others are waiting to speak to me. May God bless you, my child, and bring you home to the true faith; but till He brings you, do not come again."

I do not know if Father Ferguson's last words were judicious ones; the effect they had on me was to prevent my ever reposing confidence in him again. I read the pamphlets he sent to me, and I saw him occasionally in the presence of my mother-in-law; but I studiously avoided being left alone with him. I saw him look at me sometimes and sigh; but my heart was hardened, and my pride had been wounded, and I took no notice of him.

Yet the rebuff he had given me in the confessional, and the stress he had laid on the importance of deep reflection and earnest faith, before changing my religion for his own, had more effect on me, perhaps, than any amount of sophistry and persuasion would have had.

I perceived that, instead of thinking any one good enough to be a Catholic, he considered the Catholic religion much too good for any one, and I respected it and him accordingly. During the rest of my stay at Gentian's Cross I made no further sign to him or any one; but the seeds of the faith which was destined to console my later years were sown through the instrumentality of Father Ferguson. I did not think deeply, but I thought continuously. Scarcely a day or an hour passed but something occurred to recall his solemn warning to my mind, and I found myself constantly comparing my state of feeling with the example he had set up for me.

The consequence of which was, that I never went back to him. Doubtless it was all ordered for the best. Had I become a Catholic at that period of my existence,

might have been a cold, careless, and irreligious one. I might have learned the mysteries of the religion without reverencing them, and have engaged in its prayers without understanding them. It is well for me that it was not so. I returned from that single interview with Father Ferguson to the cares, pleasures, and duties that awaited me in that little circle which was bounded by the four walls that inclosed the nursery of my child.

And there, for ten, if not happy at least not unhappy, years, I nursed, loved, played with, and watched over her. There, from sixteen years of age to six-and-twenty, I was solely and completely the companion, nurse, and mother of my own child.

CHAPTER XVII.

TEN YEARS OF CHANGE.

I AM aware that I have spent too much time already in recalling the history of May's childhood. To the general reader it cannot be very interesting to learn how soon my baby cut her teeth, at what age she began to run alone, and whether flesh, fowl, or fish agreed best with her constitution. And even now I should pause to tear up all that has gone before, or humbly ask the pardon of my hearers, were it not that the seemingly puerile details into which I have been compelled to enter are stringently necessary to the further working out of the story of our two lives. For how else could I have made you understand the means, the circumstances (apparently so trivial, and yet which had so powerful an effect upon my first years), by which my child became to me what she now is, the very core and essence of my being? Ordinary mothers and ordinary children cannot comprehend the feeling. They must have been placed in the same position that I was—they must have had every other tie plucked up by the roots, and been left to weather the storm alone—amid uncongenial *influences and spirits, with* but one little *bud of promise to cling to*—one little heart *left of all the world to* love them—one little tongue to prattle words of sympathy and affection, before they can even realize what I grew up to feel for my own child. After the first year that I spent at Gentian's Cross, the time passed smoothly enough. I had been like a young horse first put into harness, that frets and chafes against the restraint of girth, and band, and buckle; but when I found resistance unavailing, I learned to go quietly, and, if I was not exuberantly happy, I became at least content. It was a great consolation to me to know that, if my home was not all I could desire, it was the home in which my Hugh had been reared from babyhood to manhood, and to see my little girl running about the same paths he had trotted over, swinging in the same swing, and even riding on the same old pony, now very gray about the muzzle, and stiff about the legs, which had been purchased for Hugh's use when a little boy. How baby and I (it was long before I could break myself of the habit of calling her baby) loved that patient, worn-out old animal!—how we kissed it, for the sake of dear papa in heaven!—and how indignant we became if any one dared to use a stick to it, or in any way to treat it roughly! For, though as time went on my feelings with regard to my young husband's death became more softened—though I could speak his name without a burst of tears, and even recall some of his sunny ways and words with smiles—still I was very faithful to the memory of my early love, and never a thought entered my head that it was possible that I should either forget him or replace him. I think it was this circumstance as much as any other that brought Lady Power round at last to love me, or, at least, to *like* me.

I know that it had much influence over Sir Thomas's affection for me, and that it induced him to name me in his will, as though I had been his own daughter. And, whatever reward my fidelity brought to me, indeed there was no sham about it. I was earnestly, truly, solely devoted to the memory of Hugh. The continuous lesson I repeated to my little May in bed bore its fruits to my great delight, in her first effort at speaking, which resulted in the syllable "Hoo!" How hysterical the sound made

me! How I cried and laughed over my clever baby!—and kissed her—and kissed the precious likeness which she tried to name! From that hour I spoke more to her of "Hoo" than ever. The first stories she heard were stories of "Hoo"—the first prayer she prayed was to see "Hoo" in heaven—the first present I made her, the value of which she could understand, was a copy of the portrait of "Hoo." My baby learned that she was "Hoo's" baby long before she knew that she was mine; and she learned to pity me because "Hoo" was gone away, long before I taught her to rejoice that she had come to comfort me instead. When my May meets her father in the better world, he will have no need for reproach that she had not been taught to love his memory. Bear witness for me, my Hugh, how faithful and tender a heart you left behind you!—a heart which, after passing through a storm of trouble, which made your loss appear a snow-flake, has but one hope, one prayer, one desire—to be reunited to yours in the youth and innocence of heaven!

My baby throve through all the stages of infancy, from a fat, dimpled creature, unable to run alone, tumbling about the place, all smiles and coos, to a sweet engaging little child of three years old. At this juncture, to my great delight, Mrs. Raikes left Lady Power's service. She had received an offer to superintend the nursery of a duchess, and could not in reason have been expected to remain any longer with the wife of a mere baronet. So she gave up the charge of little May, and from that hour, with the assistance of a young Irish girl, I took the task upon myself.

What pure happiness it gave me to bathe her lovely little limbs morning and evening—to brush and comb the pale-gold ringlets that hung round her head—to dress her in her dainty little suits of needlework and cambric, and then to gaze at her, and feel that she was all my own! I believe I was just as often taken for her nurse-maid as not, particularly when we went for long rambles together unattended—May seated on the old *pony that had carried my* blessed Hugh, and *I walking by her side* carrying a basketful of dolls and other rubbish, which my darling insisted upon taking with her wherever she went. It was of no use Lady Power and my sisters-in-law trying to persuade me to accompany them to balls or other festivities in Dublin; nothing on earth could induce me to leave my child even for a few hours, and the consequence was that May, like all children when made too much of, became imperious and tyrannical, and ordered me about like a slave! Yet I was a happy slave—a slave who hugged his chains! If, even for a moment, I pretended to be angry with her, one flash from those gray-blue eyes—one reproachful baby glance from Hugh's child—would bring me flying to her side to kiss away her tears or look of gloom. The little rascal knew her power, too, and exercised it fully. It was enough for her to say, "Hoo's baby wants dat," or "Oo's very cross to Hoo's child!" to melt her girlish mother into tears, and make her ready to go down on her knees and ask her tyrant's pardon for ever having dared dispute her wishes or refuse her anything.

Lady Power remonstrated with me more than once upon what she termed my infatuation; she also tried hard to persuade me to go into society, and throw off my mourning; but I combated all her arguments with but one reply, that May was Hugh's child, and I could no more leave her than I could forget him. And his mother, however soon her own wound had healed, could hardly find fault with such reasoning as mine. My greatest pleasure, perhaps, was visiting Mrs. Delancey in Park Lane, which I did each year. But even then I advanced very little in knowledge of the world. I would not accompany my sister-in-law out in the evenings, though May were safe and sound asleep in bed; neither would I join in any pleasures by day in which she could not take a share; and, though I still professed to be a Protestant, I always went to mass when the child went. This may appear to be such an exaggeration of maternal love as to call for ridicule rather than sympathy; but then it must be remembered that I had never tasted the doubtful pleasures of dissapation. I did not, therefore, miss them. My experience of life had been so simple and unvaried, that it

quite enough diversion for me to work for my little girl, and attend on her and romp with her; and when we did go together to such places as Madame Tussaud's, the Zoölogical Gardens, or an afternoon pantomime, my delight and surprise were quite as unbounded as her own. In fact, we were two children together, and at twenty years of age I was almost as unsophisticated as May was at four. From that time she grew rapidly, promising to be a much larger and taller woman than myself, who still remained very slight, very youthful-looking, and about the middle height. When May was seven, Lady Power thought it right that she should have a governess, and a lady of the name of Lamotte was engaged to conduct her education. Shall I be believed when I say that I immediately went in for studying with my child? At first, with the idea of easing the lessons which so often blistered my darling's face with tears, and then from the discovery how dreadfully ignorant I was, and a laudable desire to improve myself. "What next?" cried Lady Power on entering the school-room one day, and finding me thus employed. "My dear Katharine, I should never be surprised to see you put on one of Frances's pianafores and walk in to dessert. We shall have you changing places by-and-by. She grows so rapidly, and you refuse to grow at all. We sha'n't be able to distinguish soon which is the mother and which is the child."

"Katie's my mother, of course!" said pert Miss May. (She always called me "Katie," the little rogue! and sometimes "Hoo's own Katie!" for which I had no heart to rebuke her.)

"I wish she would keep you in better order, then," replied Lady Power, though she looked proudly at her the while. "Your mother's too good to you, Frances. She thinks too much of you, and too little of herself. I hope you will never forget it when you are a big girl."

It was occasional remarks like these that reconciled me to Gentian's Cross as a home.

I don't think a more elegant, graceful child than my May, at ten years old, could *possibly be imagined.*

She had grown out of all baby fat and *chubbiness at that period,* and was tall, slim, and upright as a poplar. Her large, gray-blue eyes (ah! my love! those eyes! those eyes!) looked out from a framework of long, dark lashes, beneath two delicately-penciled eyebrows; her complexion was fair, her nose good, her mouth small and dewy; her hair, of the palest gold, had lost all its curl, and lay silken and straight upon her shoulders. She was remarkably healthy, although not robust, and her whole appearance was striking and aristocratic.

Of her disposition I say nothing—these pages will reveal it. To me she was simply perfect; a thing to be gazed at and gloried in; a creature whom I could never thank God sufficiently for making my own child. When May was ten years old, an event occurred that filled us all with grief.

Sir Thomas Power died. The old man, although not of sufficiently determined and resolute a character to inspire an absorbing attachment, was yet so good and kindly disposed to all around him, that his death created a void greater perhaps than would have been entailed by the loss of a more vigorous nature. From the watch-dog in the kennel to the wife of his bosom, everybody missed him. And I, perhaps, most of all. For I had lived so secluded and quiet an existence at Gentian's Cross that small things pleased me more than they did other people, and my father-in-law's habitual attention had sunk very deep into my heart. When he died, I knew that I had cared for him more than all the rest of the household put together. I remembered his kindness at Hugh's death-bed, and all the memory of that mournful time revived to make me mourn still more deeply the loss of the only one who had shared it with me.

The whole family naturally assembled at the funeral; and then I heard, to my surprise, that my father-in-law had left me five hundred pounds a year, settled on me unconditionally until my death, and that Lady Power only held Gentian's Cross, and Derry Lodge, and the other properties of which dear Hugh would have been the owner, until my little May should have reached the age of twenty-one years, when she would inherit them with an income of five thousand pounds —small enough to keep up such expensive

places on, but, in my inexperienced eyes, a fortune of untold expanse.

I was very grateful for my dear father-in-law's remembrance of me. The knowledge that I was only a dependent on my husband's family had often risen up to vex and humble me. Now I was independent—free to go where I would; and, though I had long since given up the idea of breaking away from Hugh's people, the certainty of freedom gave me a pleasure I had never yet tasted, and stood me in good stead but a very short time after it had been bestowed on me.

Mrs. Delancey and Lady Power had several conversations together relative to the best means of carrying on my child's education. They admitted me freely to these discussions—as, indeed, they did now to everything that concerned myself or May. She could hardly be said to have learned anything from Miss Lamotte, for she was of too high-spirited a nature ever to derive much advantage from home instruction.

"Just like poor, dear Hugh!" said Lady Power, with a sigh.

"Just like my own lost darling!" I echoed, exulting in the undoubted likeness May displayed, both in looks and character, to her dead father.

"Mother, we couldn't do better—Katie couldn't do better, if she only knew—than send her to our dear Mère Anastase, at the convent of L'Enfant Jésus," said Mrs. Delancey.

"But where is that?" I demanded.

"In Brussels, dear; in the very best *quartier*. I and my elder sisters were all educated there. Mère Anastase is the dearest, kindest old thing in the world, and the girls have every possible advantage. Sooner or later May must leave us, Katie. It is quite out of the question she can be educated here; and why not in Brussels, as well as anywhere else?"

"But I shall go, too!" I said, eagerly.

"Do you think it would be worth while?"

"*Worth while!* Do you suppose I would part with her?"

"You can't live in the convent; it's not allowed."

"*Can't I live near?*"

"Perhaps, but I repeat my question—is it worth while? You will have her home for the holidays. Come, Katie, be reasonable. May is no longer a baby. It is time she was weaned from you, and you from her."

"O Juliet, don't speak like that! I will be reasonable and good. I will let her go to the convent of 'L'Enfant Jésus,' if Lady Power thinks it best. But let me go too!—let me go too!"

I was crying now. My mother-in-law, strange to say, was the one to console me. I think her late affliction had softened her heart.

"Of course you shall go too, if you wish it, Katharine. We were thinking of your own comfort, my dear. How will you relish living alone?"

"I care for nothing so long as I can go with my child. I would die sooner than part with her!"

"Darling Katie! no one shall ask you to do it," whispered Juliet.

"Certainly not," seconded my mother-in-law. "I am sure I need not tell you, Katharine, that Frances's welfare is as dear to my heart as to that of any one. My only wish is to see her virtuous and happy, and fit to adorn the position to which she has been born as my son's daughter. And to that end I feel she must leave Gentian's Cross. Therefore, since it is decided that Frances had better leave home for the purposes of education, there can be no fitter place for her to go to than the convent school, where so many of my daughters were brought up, and where our name will be a passport for her welcome."

"You need say no more, mother. Katie perfectly understands," said Juliet.

"I perfectly understand," I echoed; and the matter was decided on, then and there.

I was old enough by that time to see the sense of their proposal, and sufficiently independent to be rather pleased than otherwise at the prospect, when once I was familiarized with it. To have been parted from my darling would have been agony to me. To go with her to new scenes and places was pleasure, even though we were to be occasionally separated from one a

other. It is true that I was assailed with many qualms and tears before the time of our starting for Brussels arrived; but my sister, Mrs. Delancey, volunteered to see us safely over the Channel, and comfortably settled in our new quarters, and the journey, therefore, took more the appearance of a party of pleasure than the setting out upon a new and untried phase of existence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NEW HOME.

It was about this time that my child's character appeared to change. She was not less happy or less easily pleased than she had been heretofore, but she grew older and more thoughtful. She felt as much, but she considered more. The meaning of our two lives, thrown so completely upon each other for support, seemed suddenly to burst upon her comprehension; and from the time that May and I recommenced, as it were, the journey of life together, my child developed into an anxious, earnest little woman. The fact is that, until her grandfather's death, my daughter had scarcely realized there were such things in the world as loss and pain and sorrow. Then—for the first time, that she could remember—she saw me really grieved, and when that change was followed by separation from the only home and only friends she had ever known, and she was cast upon a new world alone with me, May waked up to the knowledge of what we were to one another, of what my life would have been too, perhaps, had she not been given to comfort me. From the time we left Gentian's Cross, and she perceived my qualms of fear at being launched upon a new sphere of action, her solicitude for me became most touching. She would scarcely leave my side for a minute; all her thought appeared to be whether I ate well and slept well—if I were happy and comfortable. Her fears when we got on board the steamer to cross to Calais—not for herself, *but for me—lest I should* be sick or uneasy, or fall overboard, or catch cold, were *the remark of all the passengers.*

Juliet laughed at the child's anxiety, and said she was growing a greater baby than ever. *I* knew the deep love from which it sprang, and pressed her to my heart in silent gratitude. My sister-in-law could not stay in Brussels beyond a few days. The convent to which May was to go as a weekly boarder, returning to me each Saturday till Monday, was situated in one of the large *places* of the town; and suitable apartments were soon found for me within a stone's-throw of it. Juliet wanted me to settle nearer the English part of the population—by the Rue Montagne, or in the Quartier Louise—but I would not go one door farther away from my darling than was absolutely necessary. I had brought a very nice servant over with me—one used to travel on the Continent—and with her assistance, and the help of a *fille de quartier*, I hoped to manage perfectly well in my tiny establishment of four rooms.

It was a lovely evening in September; my sister-in-law had just left us to return to England; May and I were alone. We had been unpacking our things and arranging our rooms all the afternoon, and my dear child was tired. She brought a stool, and sat down at my feet, and put her head upon my knee. I bent and kissed her.

"Are you very tired, my darling?"

"A little, mothie." She always called me "mothie" then. It was a name of her own invention, and so I preferred it to all others.

"How do you like the convent, May?" (She had been introduced to Mère Anastase and her new companions only the day before.) "Is it not all very sweet, and solemn, and quiet?"

"Not in the school-room, mothie. They were making noise enough there."

"And you will add to it, I have no doubt. But you think you will like school, don't you?"

"Yes, mothie."

"Why are you so silent, my child?"

"Mothie dear! tell me! Why did you come with me to Brussels?"

The question took me completely by surprise.

"Why did I come with you? O May!

how can you ask? Because I love you so much, my darling. Do you think that your poor mother could live without you?"

She pushed away her stool, and got upon my lap, and nestled her face close to mine.

"But all mothers don't do it," she whispered. "The girls stared so yesterday when I told them you had come to live here too. Their mothers live in England or Paris, or somewhere. Don't they care for their children, mothie?"

"Oh, yes! they must care for them," I replied vaguely. "All mothers love their little girls, of course; only perhaps they don't care for them *quite* so much as I do for you, darling."

"Why do you care so much for me, mothie?"

"O May! don't ask me! How shall I ever make you understand? Because you are my only child—you are everything I possess. The world would be as black as night to me if you were gone."

"Would it be black if Hugh were here?" asked May, with a child's unconsciousness of giving pain. I pressed her closer to me, but I did not answer. It had happened eleven years ago, but the wound bled at times still.

"Tell me all about Hugh, mothie," continued May coaxingly. "About the long walks you used to take in the woods together, and how you jumped out of your bedroom-window into the apple-tree, and how Jane sent you up bread and cheese in a basket. Do! mothie."

The story was a familiar one which had been told to Hugh's child over and over again, and accompanied, of late years, by many a smile over my own naughtiness, and May's amusement at the recital. But somehow on that night I could not tell it in the same strain.

I was in a foreign land again—alone once more, save for the dear fair head nestled in my bosom—and the remembrance of the past came back to me too solemnly and seriously to be coined into a lively tale.

I could not speak of the happy part of my brief married life that evening; all my thoughts were tinged with the reason May had demanded of me, *Why I loved my child so much?* And in a subdued voice I began to speak to her of her father's illness and death, and, as far as I *could* speak to a child, of our love for one another. I did not cry as I recalled it. My eyes may have been suffused for a moment, but the memory, though sacred, was much softened by time, and it was only on occasions now that it had the power to upset me. May listened very attentively while I tried to explain to her how very comfortless I was, when God sent her from heaven to be my comfort, and how ever since that time she had been to me what Hugh was, my only joy; and that sooner than part from her I would go to the other end of the world.

"Poor Hugh! Poor mothie!" said May, showering her soft kisses all over my face. "When I am grown up I never mean to marry, mothie. I mean always to live with you—always—always—till you are an old woman with white hair and a wrinkled face, and *quite blind*—and then I shall lead you about so carefully, and tell you everything I see, till you will be quite glad you are blind, I shall talk so much to you."

I laughed at the cheerful prospect of complete darkness and eternal chatter; but I shuddered while I laughed at the promise my innocent child made, and which I knew she would never fulfill. Ten years of that blessed little life had flown—what might not ten more bring me? Solitude and bereavement again. Oh! if my poor Hugh had but lived to be my never-failing prop and comfort.

Although May had capped my solemn story with so childish a remark as to make me laugh, yet what I had told her sank very deep into her heart, and she never forgot it. The knowledge of my devotion to her unknown father strengthened her love for me, and in after-years she often alluded to it. One day, some months subsequent to her entering the convent school, she startled me by the question:

"Mothie! shall you ever have another husband?"

"My darling, *no!* What on earth made you think of such a thing?"

"Because Emma Hayes's mother has, and so has Aimée de Monceau's. Emma does

care about it much, but Aimée hates her new papa; and so should I, I'm sure."

"Don't you be afraid, you little goose. Your mother loved your father too well ever to replace him."

"Are you *sure*, mother?"

"Quite sure, my darling! Fancy my being married again. Why, I should be ashamed of myself to think of it! Besides, I'm growing quite an old woman, May."

"O mothie! when you were only twenty-six last birthday! The girls think you look so young, too. They thought you were my elder sister when they first saw you. And Père Breville said yesterday he shouldn't have taken you for more than twenty!"

I laughed and blushed. The child's words were not entirely unpleasant to me, for, though I scorned the idea of marrying again, I rather liked to be thought very youthful to have a daughter whose head was higher than my shoulder. But I told May it was all silly talk, and the girls had much better mind their lessons than make surmises as to my probable age.

"And Père Breville, too!" said my child saucily.

Our first separation had been a sore trial to me. I had taken her to the convent myself, resolved to be brave and sensible and to part with her without any fuss, and had passed through the ordeal praiseworthily. May had been much excited at the prospect of her new life, and Mère Anastase had hurried her off to the school-room as speedily as possible, so that, beyond a few hasty tears, there had been no time for lamentation, and, as I wiped them away and turned homeward, I had congratulated myself upon getting over it well. But I had not calculated on the desolation of my rooms without her. When dinner, and tea, and bedtime came without a sight of my darling or a sound of her merry voice, and I considered that I must pass four more days in the same way before I saw her again, my grief was extravagant, and I thought that I could never bear it. I was so strange in Brussels at that time: I had no friends, and scarcely *any knowledge of the language*; so that the *town afforded little distraction* from my loss. *My only consolation was to* walk up and down outside the high gray walls of the convent and try to fancy what my darling was doing inside of them, to listen for the chapel bell, that told me morning and evening she was at prayers, and to devise all sorts of little surprises to await her return on Saturday. Oh! that first Saturday, when I woke trembling with eagerness to remember I should see her; when I presented myself at least half an hour too soon for admittance at the convent, and had to wait in the parlor while May was finishing her lessons; when the tears rushed to my eyes as I heard her voice in the corridor, and overflowed as I laughed and cried at the same time to hold my own child in my arms once more! How we danced home together in the sunshine, I as merry as she, and feeling almost as young; and how we clung to each other for the remainder of the day and sank to sleep in the same bed, perfectly happy and content! Then came a peaceful Sunday, to be followed by black Monday, and a renewal of the tears and fears, to be alleviated only by the knowledge that, as sure as the earth revolved upon its axis, Saturday must come round again. But a few weeks cured me of that folly. May grew interested in her classes and companions; she made rapid progress, and I became fond of her success and anxious nothing should hinder it; and, on my own part, I gained several friends, both English and foreign, familarized myself with the French language, and found that everything round me teemed with matter for fresh fancy and new ideas. I grew to love Brussels and all that was in it. It was the first home of my own that I had ever had, and after a year's residence there I felt as though May and I belonged to the town. When, at the end of a twelvemonth, I visited the Delanceys with my daughter, Juliet was quite as much astonished at my mental development as she was at May's physical growth.

"I should never have known you again, Katie," she cried. "How independent you have grown! Why, what have you been doing to yourself, my dear? You are quite a different creature from what you were."

"Altered for the better, I hope," I said, laughing.

"Immensely, outwardly as well as inwardly; though I never thought your dear little face wanted improvement. But the style in which you dress your hair suits you admirably. And what a color you have! And I believe you've grown taller. Katie, you are looking quite beautiful!"

"Oh! please don't talk like that, or you will compel me to blush," I answered gayly. "But what do you think of my May, Juliet? Isn't she growing lovely?"

"She's a very fine girl, but she'll never have half your grace," said my sister-in-law bluntly. "Well, Brussels seems to agree with you both, and I'm very glad you consented to go there."

Lady Power approved quite as much of the alteration which a year's absence had made in both of us as her daughter did, and from that time there appeared to be no question that May's education should be carried on and finished in Brussels. For our own parts, we were delighted to find ourselves once more established under the shadow of the convent of L'Enfant Jésus; and for five years from that period, with the exception of a periodical visit to England or Ireland, Brussels was our happy home. But I do not intend to pass all those years by in one hurried sentence; though three of them may easily be disposed of—three years, during which May grew to a tall, womanly girl of fourteen, very forward for her age and very accomplished, though still retaining much of her childish fun and willfulness, and, more than all, her love for myself. Three years, during which I had been slowly but surely coming to the conviction that, whatever others might think it wise and right to do, for *me* there was but one religion on earth, and that was the religion of my child, and the end of which found me a Catholic and happier than I had ever been in my life before.

Three years, during which my own child and I lived and loved together—during which there was no sound of coming storm or war—which sped by so peacefully and happily that I, at least, with former experience to *go upon, might have known* they could not *last.*

But how much have we to be thankful for in those quiet times that give us strength to bear the coming battle, and brace our nerves for the sight of rapine and carnage! There was but one thought at that period that had power to make my pulse beat quicker—and that was the decision at which Lady Power had arrived, that at sixteen May should leave school and return to Dublin to be presented at the viceregal court, and formally introduced into society.

"Sixteen!" I exclaimed, aghast at the idea of having to leave Brussels and go back to live in Ireland. "It is terribly young! Why, she will be little more than a child."

"You were not quite sixteen when she was born," observed my mother-in-law, dryly, on that occasion.

"No; but it was very absurd. And then I think I looked older than May will at that age."

Juliet, who was present, laughed at the idea.

"Don't flatter yourself, Katie; you would have put to shame many a well-grown girl of twelve. Why, May would make now twice what her mother was then, and she is growing every day. She will be a perfect woman in a couple of years."

"Besides," added Lady Power, "my health is not what it was, Katharine, and it is doubtful whether I shall last many years longer. I should like to see Frances introduced to society, and to know she had the weight of my name—and, if possible, my presence on the occasion—so the sooner it is done, my dear, the better. And, after all, two years is a long time to look forward to. Who knows what may happen in two years?"

"Ah! who, indeed?

I was silent, and made no further objection. It was of no use fretting over what might never come to pass.

And the last two years had certainly made a great alteration in Lady Power's health. She had grown feeble and inactive. All the old people seemed passing away. I was in mourning at that very moment for poor Aunt Tessie; and my father-in-law was gone; and now, I supposed, Lady Power would be the next!

And I sighed—not so much for

for the thought of that grave in Père-la-Chaise, to which the mere mention of sickness or death always had the power to speed my memory, and for the brave young life which ought to have outlasted theirs, but which was laid down to sleep in it so early.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW FRIEND.

Among the kindest friends that I had made in Brussels was the British consul, whom I shall call Mr. Chester. He had been an old acquaintance of my father, Captain Arundel—had served with him, I think, in India—and, having called on me and discovered who I was, never failed to pay me the most unremitting kindness and attention. It was at his house that I first entered into society—and very shy and awkward I was upon that occasion; but Mr. Chester introduced me to all the best families in Brussels, and very soon I was as much at home at the consulate as I was in my own rooms.

I am speaking now of my first year's residence abroad, when I had many scruples about mixing in society at all, and was frightened to hear my own voice in the company of others. Little by little, however, Mr. Chester and his friends persuaded me to overcome my morbid shrinking from publicity, and to accept the innocent pleasures that came in my way, and which I was as fully able to enjoy as any girl among them. But one style of entertainment I never mixed in, and that was dancing. I had never learned to dance, which would at once have put it out of the question; but, had I done so, I do not think I should ever have gone to a ball. I was quite ready for enjoyment, but I could not forget that I was a widow and a mother; and there seemed to me something so undignified—so completely opposed to a mind that had ever felt sorrow—in dancing, that I would never even yield to my friend's entreaties that I would go to the public balls, *if it were only to look on. I* dare say I was *ultra-fastidious; and, doubtless, lack of cus-om had much to do with my feelings—but I looks*, and I never shall.

I am glad now that it was so. I am glad to think that I have never danced with any one, except when I held my baby's hands in the twilight, and capered about the room to the music of her bubbling laughter, when even Hugh might have looked down from heaven upon me, and felt that my mirth was doing him no wrong.

But at the time of which I now write, when May was fourteen years of age, I was constantly going into society—"grown quite dissipated," as my saucy child used to tell me. But, as a rule, I would never accept an invitation for Saturday evening. That was kept sacred to intercourse with my daughter, whose company was ever to me the most attractive in the world.

Yet, one Saturday—how well I remember it!—in the middle of January, I was engaged to go to the consulate. It was the birthday of my old friend's wife, and it had been a long promise that I should be present on the occasion.

"It never struck me to think on what day of the week it would fall," I remarked, quite disconsolately, as I stood before my toilet-glass, arranging myself for the festivity in question.

"Never mind, dear mothie," said May soothingly. "I shall amuse myself very well while you're away; and you won't be late."

"Oh, I'm sure not to be late, darling! I shall be only too anxious to get back to you!"

"But you mustn't run away before the evening's half over, mothie, or Mrs. Chester will be hurt. Are you going to wear Aunt Tessie's pearls?" (They were the one thing of value poor Aunt Tessie had had to bequeath to me.)

"Won't they be too smart, May?"

"Not a bit; and they look so beautiful on your arms and neck! How white and round your arms are, mothie! I shall never have such a skin as yours, Aunt Juliet says. There's too much pink in my face and too little brown in my hair for that."

"What nonsense, darling!" (Nothing vexed me so much as to hear my good points brought forward at the expense of those of my child.) "I never had half your

"Oh, what a story!" said my tall girl, as she came beside me and hung upon my neck. "You're the dearest, sweetest, cleverest, prettiest mothie a girl ever had! You're the prettiest woman in Brussels!—I always say so!"

"May dear, I shall be angry if you talk like that! I don't like it. It makes me feel as if I must have brought you up all wrong, to think so much about one's personal appearance."

"But I can't help *seeing!*" cried impudent May. "What were my eyes given me for? And just look at your hands, mothie! They're as white and as soft as satin!"

As she spoke, and I glanced in the mirror at my own reflection, a sudden remembrance struck me of what Hugh had prophesied concerning the skinny little hand on which he had placed the wedding-ring that still glittered there. It was one of those memories that come like a flash of lightning, and seem (for a brief moment) to illuminate the whole past, and recall everything at once.

The tears rushed into my eyes.

"So much the worse, my child!" I said almost pettishly, as I turned away. "There is no one to care now whether they are smooth or rough!"

"Oh, mothie darling!" she exclaimed pathetically, for she *heard* the tears in my voice, "don't *I* care?"

"It cannot make much difference to you, my May."

"It does!—of course it does! Do you suppose I don't like to have a nice young pretty mother, instead of a wrinkled-up old frump with bob-curls, and a face all over pimples?"

She made me laugh.

"I don't know about the curls and the pimples, darling; but I expect I shall soon be an old frump, whether you like it or not. Do you know that I shall be thirty next birthday?"

"And what's that, mothie?—nothing! Emma Hayes is two months younger than I am, and her mother is fifty. Besides, you *ought* to keep yourself young, because of *Hugh.*"

"*May, what do you mean?*"

"Why, mothie, he won't grow older in heaven, you know; and when you meet him, don't you think he would rather you were nice, and jolly, and young, instead of crabbed and old?"

"O May, don't! I forgot, darling—I forgot."

But it was such speeches as these that bound me each day nearer to my child. She had grown up so completely one with me; she had shared my thoughts and feelings so unreservedly, that we were much more like two sisters, in our intercourse with each other, than like a mother and daughter. She always spoke openly of her dead father to me, and with the greatest certainty of our all three being united as one family in the world to come, until space and time would appear to dwindle into nothing, and our meeting with Hugh as a thing of to-morrow. No wonder that I loved to talk with her.

"Only fancy, mothie," she would say, "how surprised Hugh will be when you show me to him! He won't believe I'm his child—will he? He'll say, 'Nonsense! why, she's twice as big as you are, Katie!'"

"But you are very like him, my May. He will recognize you by your face."

"I shall know *him* mothie, I'm sure; and I shall rush at him and say, 'Hugh! I love you, though I've never seen you!' But I expect he won't look at me while you're there."

"My own child! we belong equally to him. He can never separate you from me in his thoughts, I'm sure."

"Do you think he knows I'm born?"

"I hope so! Oh, I do hope so! It has been my great comfort to think he sees us both, May."

"Then I'm sure he does, mothie; because God would never let you feel the comfort, unless there was some reason for it. Perhaps he's in this room now!"

"I wish I could believe it."

"Do believe it, mothie! Perhaps the belief will bring him here! Perhaps he is waiting to hear you speak to him. I wouldn't be frightened if I were to see him: I should be glad. It seems so strange to have a father, and yet not be able to see him till you go to heaven!"

It was conversations such as these

grew out of the perfect familiarity existing between May and me, and which made me feel sometimes as if my dear dead boy were really not gone from among us, but only hidden by some earthly vapor which needed death to clear from before our eyes.

But I am wandering from the evening of the Chesters' dinner-party. I let my child clasp the pearls on my neck and arms, above the black-velvet dress I wore; and then, with many an injunction to make herself happy, and many an asseveration that I should be home early, I departed to the house of my friends. It was a very large gathering, for the Chesters had been resident so long in Brussels that they knew half the town.

I was taken into dinner by an old French gentleman who was on his way to Paris, and who, finding I had visited that city, drew from me some slight details of the occasion which took me there. Whereupon we got into a most interesting conversation (to me) concerning the cemetery of Père-la-Chaise (to which I had never yet summoned up courage to pay a pilgrimage), and my companion ended by promising me to go there himself on his return home, and send me word of the condition in which he might find my husband's grave, and what it might require in the way of being repaired. I talked so long and earnestly on this subject with my new acquaintance, that I hardly took any notice of the dinner, or the rest of the company; still I could not help occasionally feeling (in the way that one *does* feel without seeing) that other eyes were on me; and once or twice, on glancing up, I suddenly encountered the gaze of a gentleman who was seated on the opposite side of the table, divided from me by a large *épergne* of hothouse flowers. I can see now, as I recall the circumstance, the large dark eyes bent upon me from a face half hidden by crimson geraniums, white camellias, and green ferns; and can remember the little start I gave at each encounter, and how quickly my opposite neighbor withdrew his gaze, and turned with some careless question to his next companion. Once I thought that I must *have been talking too loud*, and lowered my *voice in consequence; but the fear did not trouble me much, nor did I* even remember the fact until quite the middle of the evening, when Mr. Chester brought the same gentleman up to introduce to me.

"Lord Eustace Annerley wishes to be presented to you, Mrs. Power," he said formally; and then hurriedly whispering in my ear, he went on, "Awfully good fellow; son of the Earl of Riversdale; knows your husband's family; must make great friends with him," and left me to my fate.

I was not quite such a Goth as I had been, but I was still ridiculously shy with strangers; and, as Lord Eustace bowed and stood before me, I felt myself redden up to the roots of my hair, and every topic of conversation quietly slip out of my head.

My companion, however, did not appear to be afflicted with the same complaint. The large dark eyes, I felt, were bent full upon me, although mine were nervously examining the lace on my pocket-handkerchief.

"I have been wishing for the pleasure of an introduction to you all the evening," he commenced: "I should have asked for one long before, had you not been so surrounded by admirers there did not appear a chance of getting near you."

"Only Monsieur Odot," I began explanatorily.

"Ah! the old French gentleman. I watched you holding a most absorbing conversation with him at dinner. You had no eyes nor ears for any one else; the rest of the world could only look on and envy him."

"We were not speaking of a very enviable subject," I said, with a sigh, "though it interested me. He was telling me about my husband's grave in Père-la-Chaise."

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed Lord Eustace gravely; "I should not have mentioned it so carelessly. I had no idea, of course, of the topic of your conversation. I hope you will forgive me!"

"There is nothing to forgive. It all happened a long time ago. Mr. Chester says you are acquainted with some of my husband's family."

"I knew one member of it—and a fine young fellow he was; but he died—let me see—oh! twenty years ago. We were at school together in Ireland. His name was

Hugh Power. He was a son of the late Sir Thomas Power, of Gentian's Cross."

"But that was my Hugh!" I exclaimed, breathlessly. "It isn't twenty years—it will be only fifteen years next June since he died!—and it was of his grave I was speaking to Monsieur Odot."

"*Your husband?* Are you really Hugh Power's widow? You must forgive my ignorance, Mrs. Power, but, though I *did* hear something of it at the time, I really never realized the fact that poor old Hugh was married. He was such a perfect boy!—and it seems such ages ago since it occurred. Why, we were exactly the same age."

I looked at him in astonishment. It seemed incredible that Hugh should have been as old as Lord Eustace, had he lived. And yet, of course, he was right. He was a fine-looking man, himself, of six-and-thirty; and dear Hugh had been one-and-twenty when we married.

"Indeed he *was* my husband," I went on, anxious to convince Lord Eustace of the fact. "We had only been married a few weeks when he died of typhoid fever."

"But—forgive me for mentioning such a thing—you look so very young, Mrs. Power. I was astonished when I heard you had been married at all."

"I am six years younger than Hugh," I answered; "but I have been fifteen years a widow. I have a daughter of fourteen," I added, eagerly.

"Nonsense! I cannot believe it."

"Ask Mr. Chester, then. And she is so like Hugh, Lord Eustace. You must see her. I am sure you would recognize his features at once."

"I shall be delighted to have the opportunity of doing so. Still, it appears incredible to me—you with a daughter of fourteen. You must look like sisters."

"Some people say we do," I answered, with a quiet laugh.

"Fancy your being my old friend Hugh's wife," he went on with genuine interest. "It must have been sympathy that attracted me to you from the first. Did you never hear him speak of Eustace Annerley?"

"*I do not remember.* He was with the *Rev. Mr. Dean at Guildford* when I met him. He did not often speak to me of his former school-days."

"Ah! we were both very naughty boys, I am sorry to say, and expelled together from Parnassus House, in Dublin. And so poor old Hugh married at one-and-twenty. What did his parents say to that, Mrs. Power?"

This question paved a way for the discussion of a subject in which I felt quite at home; and Lord Eustace Annerley having taken a seat beside me, I launched out into a long history of my courtship, marriage, and subsequent troubles, until, I think, he must have known almost as much about them as I did. He listened very attentively, pulling his long mustaches thoughtfully as he did so; and I had leisure during that conversation to notice what a marvelously handsome man he was, although his beauty made no difference to my feelings respecting him. All I could think of was, that he had known and loved my Hugh.

"You interest me wonderfully, Mrs. Power," he remarked, as I brought my story to a conclusion. "It was a happy chance that brought me to my old friend Chester's this evening. I am only passing through Brussels."

"You do not live here, then?" I said, with some disappointment.

"Oh! dear, no. I am supposed to live on my father's estate in Wicklow, but, in reality, I am here, there, and everywhere. It's a great misfortune to be an eldest son, Mrs. Power. My brothers, Jack and Sidney, who have to work for their living, are infinitely happier than I am, who have positively nothing to do."

"You are not married, then?"

"No, thank—I mean, unfortunately, I am not. I suppose I shall have to marry some day, but I have not been able to meet a lady yet who suited me."

"How fastidious you must be!"

"Excuse me, not at all. I see lots of nice girls, but they won't have me."

"Have you ever asked them, Lord Eustace?"

He looked slyly at me. In every line of his face one could read he was not a marrying man—that, if he ever did marry, it would be by force rather than inclination

"Constantly. I'm always being refused; and here I am, at six-and-thirty, a miserable bachelor. I have not been so fortunate as my friend Hugh, you see, Mrs. Power."

I did not relish his using that name in a jesting manner, and turned the subject.

"I should like you to see my little girl before you leave Brussels."

"I mean to make a point of seeing your little girl, if you will permit me. On what day may I have the honor of calling upon you?"

Now, of late years I had made a rule of always remaining at home on Tuesday afternoons to receive my friends, and my little *réunions*, given in a country where such gatherings are so much better understood and attended than in England, were quite noted throughout Brussels. Coffee and cakes, a little music—but always *good* music—an opportunity for a little flirting, and a great deal of conversation, were all the inducements my Tuesdays held out to my guests, yet week after week my rooms were filled with the best people in Brussels, and many a day and evening of amusement grew out of the meetings and arrangements those afternoons engendered. May and I tried the same plan once, years afterward, in Ireland, and found our invitations so coldly responded to that we relinquished the idea in despair; a couple of old maids in muddy boots, who looked in on their way to town, and the mother of a large family, who hadn't a moment to spare, constituting the average success of our "at homes." But English people, as a rule, do not know how much they lose by an exhibition of the national "reserve," on which the majority pride themselves, and which, interpreted, simply means a want of sociability and an excess of ill-breeding which prevents their ever thoroughly knowing what it is to enjoy the society of their fellow-creatures.

I would have asked Lord Eustace to make one of my guests on the following Tuesday, but that he had intimated his intention of leaving Brussels beforehand, and that he would not see May there.

I told him so.

"*But may I not stay* in Brussels if I *like?*" *he replied, with a comical pretense of asking a favor.*

"Of course," I stammered; "only I thought—I imagined that you said—"

"That I was only passing through? Exactly. So I was, because I had no inducement to stay longer. But I am my own master, Mrs. Power; and if you will permit me to attend your reception next Tuesday—"

"But you won't see May," I interrupted him with. "She only comes home from the convent where she is being educated on Saturdays and Sundays. And you *must* see May."

"I *must* see May," repeated Lord Eustace. "Then that entails my remaining here till next Saturday. Not a very great hardship, Mrs. Power; particularly if you will help me to pass the time pleasantly. Do you skate?"

It was one of the few amusements in which I felt I might join without loss of dignity. Many ladies, much older and more matronly in appearance than myself, skated daily on the lake in the Jardins Zoologiques, and for some winters past, ever since May had been able to skate with me, I had regularly indulged in this healthy and exciting exercise.

"I do indeed," I answered eagerly, "and so does my little girl. We were on the lake for three hours this afternoon. May wore a Polish costume. She looks so pretty in it. I believe she is considered one of the best skaters here."

"A Polish costume!" repeated Lord Eustace.

"Yes, of dark-blue cloth and fur. By-the-way, she nearly had an accident, the darling. She was run down by a couple of boys, and would have been thrown right into the water where the ice is broken—so she tells me—had it not been for a gentleman on the bank who stopped her by catching at her pelisse. It has made me so nervous! I shall not be able to let her go out of my sight on the ice again."

"It was I," cried my companion. "I am so glad."

"Was it you who saved her?"

"'Saved' is rather too strong a term to use. It was I who caught at her skirts as she was passing. I was sitting on the bank,

strapping one of my skates, when I saw the boys run up against her from behind. And so that was really your daughter! What a curious coincidence! She would have had a nasty ducking, poor child, if she had been pushed into that hole. It should be protected in some way."

"Oh, how can I ever thank you enough!" I exclaimed. "I tried to find the gentleman who had rescued her, but May couldn't point him out. What shall I say to convince you of my gratitude?"

"Simply nothing, Mrs. Power. It was the commonest act possible. I merely put out my hand. But I remember the furred pelisse distinctly, and the long fair hair. She seemed to be a very pretty little girl."

"Oh! she is lovely," I said enthusiastically. "She is the image of her poor dear father. If I wished you to see her before, Lord Eustace, I wish it doubly now. Could you come in to-morrow afternoon? We generally have a couple of quiet hours on Sunday between the times for going to church."

"I shall be delighted, I'm sure," replied Lord Eustace, and I returned home quite in a glow of gratitude, and full of praises of my new acquaintance.

I found my child sitting up for me, devouring a novel.

"Oh, you naughty May! why weren't you in bed two hours ago?"

"Oh, you naughty mothie! why weren't you home when you said you would be?"

"Am I later than usual, darling?"

"Well, it's one o'clock, ma'am, and you are generally in bed by eleven. Was Mrs. Chester's birthday party more than usually delightful, that it made you forget the time? Who was there?"

Whereupon I launched into a description of the fascinating stranger who had been at school with my Hugh, and felt so powerful an interest in his widow and daughter.

"And only fancy, darling," I concluded, "Lord Eustace is the gentleman who saved you from falling under the ice this afternoon. I could have gone down on my knees to him when I heard it."

"Is he?" said May, in a tone of disappointment; "*why, mothie, you said he was handsome!*"

"So he is handsome," I responded, with a blush.

"Well, he can't be the same man then that caught me by the skirt to-day. He was quite old and black!"

"Old and black, darling?"

"Well, you know what I mean, mothie. Black hair and eyes and a beard, and as old as—oh! quite as old as Mr. Chester."

"Nonsense, May," I said, laughing, but I was half crying and laughing too. "Lord Eustace is just the same age as your dear father would have been—thirty-six. It is the prime of a man's life, dear."

"Is it, mothie? Well, he looked old to me. And I didn't like him altogether either."

"That is very ungrateful, May."

"Oh! of course I'm glad he pulled me up in time, only you said he was handsome. Are you coming to bed, mothie? I'm so tired"—she finished with a yawn. And in talking over, with my child, the events of the past week, I almost forgot Lord Eustace Annerley.

But he did not permit us to forget him. True to a minute he presented himself before me the next afternoon. I looked at him as he entered, and could not understand May's evident aversion to his appearance. He was certainly a very handsome man; of medium height and build, his lithe muscular figure was yet exceedingly graceful in its proportions. His features were good, his large dark eyes, already commented upon, being among the most attractive of them.

A drooping mustache and short crisp beard covered the mouth and lower part of the face; but the expression in Lord Eustace's eyes was, when he desired it, so soft and gentle as to make one feel there was no necessity to go further than those eyes for his character.

He greeted me with some *empressement*, and as if he were an old friend of the family; as, indeed, I almost felt he had a right to consider himself. I had dressed my May with the utmost care: her fair hair, which she still wore loose, flowed over her shoulders; her blue eyes sparkled with mirth and curiosity; her cheeks were tinged with soft bloom. She looked beautiful, and,

presented her to the notice of Lord Eustace, I watched his face, and saw with pride the surprise and pleasure which became apparent at the sight of her.

"You are right!" he said, addressing me; "she is indeed strikingly like my old friend. so much so, indeed, that—that—"

Lord Eustace did not finish his sentence, but, turning away to the window, seemed by the action to convey the idea that the first view of Hugh's child had been too much for him.

My heart began to beat in sympathy with his. I looked down and my lips trembled.

"Here is Hugh's portrait," said May abruptly, as she detached the photograph I have alluded to before from its place on the wall, and thrust it before Lord Eustace's gaze.

"Stop, May! gently, my child," I said warningly. I feared the pictured likeness of my husband might have a still greater effect upon the stranger.

"What nonsense, mothie! If he remembers Hugh so well he'll like to see it;" and without further prefix she placed it in his hands.

"I can trace a similarity of disposition as well as feature in this young lady," said Lord Eustace a moment after, turning to me and smiling; though I thought he smiled with an effort. "I fancy she has inherited not a little of our dear Hugh's impetuosity and generous warmth of character—is it not so, Mrs. Power?"

"You judge correctly, Lord Eustace. My child is a little hasty at times, though you may well imagine she is no less dear to me for that. We have so grown up together (if I may use the expression) that we understand each other's nature perfectly, and are the very best of friends—are we not, dear May?" I ended affectionately.

"We are, indeed, dear Katie!" answered that coolest of young ladies, with quite a defiant glance at our new acquaintance; "and never intend to have any friends but each other, do we?"

"I don't need any other," I replied, with *a faint laugh.*

"But I hope the bond, however sacred, *admits of a little variation,"* said Lord Eustace; "that there is an outside rank of friends into which one may hope to gain admittance."

"Oh! of course—" I commenced, but May interrupted me.

"No, there isn't!" she said, almost rudely. "Mothie and I are perfectly happy ourselves. We don't want any outside nor any one to interfere between us—do we mothie?"

"My own child! you quite misunderstand Lord Eustace. He was speaking our general acquaintances. You are very fond of Mr. and Mrs. Chester, you know—and the D'Armvilles, and the Bretins, and the Murrays. We should often feel dull it were not for the kindness of our friends Brussels."

"Oh, yes! I don't mind *them,*" she said pointedly. Lord Eustace only seemed amused by her petulance.

"I hope that some day you will include me among '*them,*'" he said, laughing; "for I should be sorry to remain in your bad graces, Miss May."

"Pray don't speak like that," I urged. with real annoyance. "May meant nothing by her thoughtless speech. She would indeed be ungrateful if she did. Letting alone the fact of your having known and appreciated her dear father, the service you rendered her yesterday should insure her kindly feeling. May, my darling, that reminds me that you have not yet thanked Lord Eustace for having saved you from a very nasty accident."

"Oh! I'm sure I'm very much obliged to him, mothie."

"I am sure you ought to be, dearest. You might have been drowned, except for his promptitude. The very thought makes me shudder!"

"I should have pulled myself out if I *had* tumbled in," said May, with an affectionate caress.

"I've no doubt you would have proved equal to that occasion, Miss May, as you will to any other that may fall in your way," remarked Lord Eustace. "And may I ask what school you go to?"

This question much offended my child's dignity. Fourteen years old, and to be

asked about her school as if she were six!

"I do not go to any school," she replied promptly; "I attend the classes at the Convent de l'Enfant Jésus!"

"Oh, indeed! I beg your pardon. And what do your classes consist of?"

"Everything."

"That leaves a very wide margin."

"Then you must fill it up yourself."

"May darling!" I exclaimed, shocked at her pertness, "do try and answer like a reasonable being."

"Well, mothie, you don't want a list of the week's exercises, do you?"

"I want you to behave like a little lady, dear."

"Miss May is evidently not in a humor for talking this afternoon," said Lord Eustace, with an attempt to turn it off. "We shall be the best of friends before long, I foresee that; but she is quite right not to bestow her confidence before she knows whether it will be well placed."

Then he directed his conversation entirely to myself, and we were soon again deeply engaged in reminiscences of the past. Six o'clock struck. We had had our coffee; the bells began to ring out for vespers. Still my guest showed no signs of moving.

"It's time for church, mothie!" cried May, *sans cérémonie*, as she flung her book to one side, and left the room to put on her hat and cloak. I half rose. I did not like actually to dismiss Lord Eustace, yet I could not feel justified in neglecting the evening service on his account.

"You must not let me detain you," he said, observing my action.

"May and I are accustomed to attend vespers," I answered apologetically. "We dine early on Sundays. Did you intend—would it be of any use asking you to accompany us, Lord Eustace? We always have a little supper on our return."

"You are very good. I should have been delighted; but I must confess I am not much in the habit of attending church, and—"

"You have been to mass already, I have no doubt."

"*I am not a Catholic*, Mrs. Power."

"Not a Catholic! I am so sorry," I stammered.

The news took me quite by surprise. Somehow, on account of his being an Irishman and acquainted with my husband's family, it had never entered my head to suppose he was a Protestant; and the information gave me pain, though I could hardly have said why.

"Are you so bitter against Protestants, then?" he asked.

"Oh, no! God forbid! Only—I was unprepared for the intelligence. It never struck me but that you were one of us—having been at school with dear Hugh, and all!"

"I hope I haven't sunk in your estimation because of my confession. I would be a Catholic twenty times over, sooner than do that."

"You should not speak so carelessly, Lord Eustace. No! what difference can your faith make? You were Hugh's friend; that is enough to make you mine."

I held out my hand as I spoke; and, as he took it, he raised it to his lips. I was living in a country where such an act means little; so I accepted it as courtesy and nothing more. May came in at that moment, ready for church, so there was no time for further conversation. I bade Lord Eustace hastily farewell, and prepared to accompany her to S. Gudule. But I recall, with shame, that I could not help my thoughts wandering several times, during the service that followed, to our new acquaintance; and more than once, as the remembrance of his being a Protestant flashed across my mind, I detected myself in giving vent to a heavy sigh. Yet, what concern on earth was it of mine if Lord Eustace Annerley belonged to one faith or another? He was an early friend of my dead husband—that was the only ground on which we had a pretext for knowing one another. He stood to May and me in that position alone.

He must be our friend according to the love and loyalty he cherished for dear Hugh's memory—nothing less nor more.

CHAPTER XX.

A NEW FEELING.

But I could not understand the aversion which my child appeared to have conceived for Lord Eustace. It was without grounds — inexplicable. Her manner during their interview had annoyed me—much more on account of my pride in her, and anxiety that every one should admire her as I did, than any other feeling; and, as we sat at supper together that evening, I reverted to the subject.

"May darling! whatever made you so curt with Lord Eustace this afternoon?"

"I don't like him, mothie!"

"But why, my child? He had evidently every desire to make friends with you; but you spoke quite rudely to him sometimes."

"I don't want to make friends with him."

"That doesn't sound like yourself, May; you generally behave so nicely in society. And the mere fact of his having been your dear father's friend—"

"Oh! what does he care about my father, mothie? He only says it to please you. It's all humbug. If he had really cared so much about Hugh, do you suppose he would have lived fifteen years without discovering he had left a widow and child?"

That thought had never struck me before. In some things my child was practically more a woman of the world than I was.

"He was a very young man at the time, May, and perhaps he did not care so much; but as we get on in life we know better what the loss of a true friend means. Lord Eustace was certainly affected at the sight of you and the picture."

"He turned away to the window, you mean; that's easy enough to do."

"My darling child! you are terribly prejudiced against the poor man. What on earth can have made you so? What do you see to dislike in him so much?"

"I can't tell you, mothie. He's got evil *eyes!*"

"May! his eyes are beautiful!"

"Well, that's a difference of opinion, you see. I don't think so. Then he has a horrid way of looking at one—all round the corner."

"One would imagine he squinted!" I said, laughing.

"No; I suppose he's handsome, as faces go. But after all, mothie, what do I know about gentlemen?"

"You're generally polite to them, May."

"In a way, perhaps. But we don't want them bothering here; do we, darling?"

She left her seat, and came to my side as she spoke, kneeling down and laying her dear head on my breast. "We're very happy here together, mothie, and I'm worth all the gentlemen in the world to you—ain't I?"

Her question startled me as if I had been doing something wrong.

"My own child, yes!—who ever thought otherwise? But we must be civil to the outer world occasionally, darling, or we shall get the character of being bears."

"Ah! I don't mind people coming on Tuesdays—that's the day for nuisances; but I don't like having our Sundays cut up. Don't let Lord Eustace come again on Sunday, mothie! that's *our* day—yours and mine."

"He sha'n't," I said fervently, as I embraced her, and remembered, with a slight pang of self-reproach, that this was the first occasion on which our Sunday seclusion had been broken in upon by any one.

On Tuesday morning a basket of the most beautiful hot-house flowers, for the decoration of my rooms, was left at our door with Lord Eustace Annerley's compliments.

I considered the attention both kind and flattering, and I told Lord Eustace so when we met in the afternoon.

"It is nothing," he said carelessly; "I am only glad you liked them. But one thing I truly regret, Mrs. Power, and that is the absence of your little girl from the assembly. I see she does not like me; but I am determined to use every means in my power to overcome the feeling."

"O Lord Eustace! I trust you will forgive her childish pertness. I am afraid she has been rather spoilt. She can hardly be aware how rude her manner seems."

"Do you think I could cherish any feelings but those of kindness toward Hugh's

child? Indeed, you don't know me! So bent am I on making friends with Miss May, that I have delayed my departure from Brussels on purpose."

"You are too good!" I murmured.

"Not at all: I do it to please myself. If this frost holds out, I shall be on the ice next Saturday with a peace-offering in my hand, before which I hope even Miss May's coolness will be found to melt."

"I only trust you may meet with all the gratitude your kindness deserves. She is a very dear child, as you will say when you know her."

"I have not the least doubt of it. With such parents, she could not be otherwise than dear. Do you intend to skate before Saturday, Mrs. Power?"

"I hope to be on the ice to-morrow."

I knew when I said this that Lord Eustace meant to meet me there, but I could not conceive that in so public a place, where I was in the midst of all my acquaintance, there could be any harm in his doing so. On the contrary, I was flattered by the evident desire this man evinced to gain my friendship, and I was anxious to make up to him for May's rudeness by proving I did not share her unreasonable dislike. We saw each other more than once during that week; but I did not tell my child so when we met the following Saturday afternoon, nor was Lord Eustace's name mentioned between us. As soon as May reached home, she changed her dress for skating, and we proceeded to the Jardins Zoologiques together. Skaters in England have little idea of the height of enjoyment that exercise can reach in a climate where the frost will be unbroken for six or eight weeks together, and where the utmost care is taken to preserve the ice in good condition. In so changeable a temperature as ours, it is impossible to make arrangements for skating parties, except from day to day, with any certainty of carrying them out; but in Holland and Belgium it is so common to be able to skate the whole winter, that all sorts of amusements are inaugurated upon the ice. In Brussels, especially, there was always something going on; and *fairs, concerts, or fêtes* by torchlight were *events of every-day* occurrence. The dresses prepared for such occasions also were both fantastic and pretty, so that the surface of the frozen lake at the Jardins Zoologiques often presented a medley of national and fancy costumes.

May delighted in these gatherings, and dire were her lamentations at the first symptom of a thaw. Her practised skating, fanciful dress, and sweet face rendered her an object of attraction to both visitors and residents, and I was never more proud than when I followed in her wake, listening to the complimentary remarks that were made upon her from all sides.

"There's a lovely girl!" some one would observe, as she skimmed past him.

"By Jove, yes! How well she skates, too! Doing the outside edge like a bird! Wonder if she's English."

"Not much doubt of that, man. You never saw a Belgian with such limbs. I should like to know her name."

"What's the use? She's most likely some heavy swell. But she's the prettiest girl I've seen here out and out."

And they never seemed to guess that the little woman in black velvet and sable who hovered about them as they spoke was the mother of the girl they had been admiring. That shows how seldom they can have looked at me, after her. Had they scrutinized my face they must have detected the maternal love and pride that were glowing there.

On the afternoon in question, May, as usual, had flown at least three times round the lake before I had got my skates on. When I joined her, I found she was talking with Lord Eustace Annerley, and, to my surprise, amicably.

"Look what Lord Eustace has given me, mothie!" she said, as I came up with them; "isn't it kind?"

She held an open morocco case toward me as she spoke, containing a brooch and ear-rings set with turquoises. They were not very valuable trinkets, perhaps, but they were just the pretty, showy things that would take a child's fancy, and May had never had any ornaments of her own before. There were, indeed, certain heavy, valuable, sombre sets of diamonds and emeralds waiting for her coming of age in her Irish hor

but she did not even know of their existence, and jewelry of any sort had had no uses for her hitherto. I saw her dear eyes sparkling as she contemplated the pretty blue stones, and an expression, not unlike regret that she had treated the donor of them with rudeness, already stealing over her countenance.

"Aren't they pretty, mothie—isn't it kind?" she repeated.

"They are beautiful, darling; and it is more than kind of Lord Eustace. Indeed, I think I ought to scold him for spending so much money on a very naughty little girl."

I looked up at Lord Eustace as I spoke, but his eyes met mine in mild reproach.

"Please don't make any unpleasant allusions, Mrs. Power. May and I are going to be great friends henceforth and forever; indeed, I shouldn't wonder if we ended in a violent flirtation—eh, May?"

"They are lovely," said my child, alluding to the trinkets, and not noticing the question put to her.

"And flowers, too, May? you are a lucky girl," I remarked, seeing that Lord Eustace held a small bouquet in his hand.

"The flowers are for you—if you will accept them," he said in a low voice, turning to myself.

I laughed—and perhaps I blushed a little with pleasure and surprise—as I fastened the bouquet in the bosom of my dress; but when I looked up again I was startled by the steadfast gaze with which May was regarding me.

"Hold these, mothie," she exclaimed abruptly, as she thrust the case of jewelry in my hand; "I'm going to speak to Jeanne d'Armville. I can't stand still any longer."

And she was off from my side like an arrow from a bow.

"Did she thank you?" I inquired of my companion, though without lifting my eyes.

"I require no thanks, dear Mrs. Power. If you are pleased I am more than repaid."

"I cannot help being gratified by any kindness shown to my child."

"I thought so—therefore, in my small way, I tried to show it. Your friendship is *not to be gained without* May's. I see that *plainly. Therefore* May's friendship must *be gained at any risks.*"

I was flattered at the compliment, but I resented the imputation.

"I hope you do not think my little girl is mercenary?"

"Not at all. But she is a child, and children must be won by appealing to their senses. We, who have lived and suffered, speak to each other through the medium of our spirits. If they hold mutual intercourse, no outward sign is needed of the feeling we bear toward each other. That is what the world calls sympathy, Mrs. Power. But how can you expect a young girl who has never loved or lost to sympathize with those who have? She may feel for them—she cannot feel *with* them."

"You speak as though you had loved and lost, Lord Eustace."

"I have done both, though not in the sense you mean. I have never truly been what people call 'in love,' Mrs. Power. I am a very lonely man in consequence. I often long for the comfort and rest of a home, and the sight of such happiness as exists between you and your child makes me feel hard and envious."

"It should not have that effect. We are indeed very happy, but such happiness is not unattainable. It may come to you some day, and through the same sources. I hope it may."

"Thank you. But I am not sanguine. I am afraid I have lived too long now to change my habits with impunity. I could not put up with all the airs and graces of a fashionable girl. Matrimony does not always go smoothly at first, Mrs. Power. It takes time to make people go in double harness quietly; and I am too old to care about the fuss of quarreling and making up again, and relinquishing one's own will to the will of another. It does not appear worth while to me."

He looked so handsome, and lazy, and *insouciant*, as he said this, I could not help laughing.

"But need marriage necessarily bring quarreling in its train, Lord Eustace? All girls are not determined to have their own way. I cannot believe that had dear Hugh lived we should ever have had a serious difference."

"Perhaps not. But Hugh, even at twenty, was a thoroughly careless, easy-going, happy-tempered fellow, who would as soon have thought of striking a woman as thwarting her."

"He was the most generous, warm-hearted darling that ever lived," I cried, enthusiastically. "No one knows what my Hugh was except myself."

"Exactly so, dear Mrs. Power; and so for the space of four weeks you did not quarrel. Mind! I do not mean to say you ever would have done so, but you had not a very severe trial, had you?"

"No; but, had he lived to be eighty, I couldn't have crossed my Hugh. He was so sweet and sunny."

"I know he was, and so I believe were you. Your sunniness would have had a large share in the preservation of domestic peace. My poor friend, had he lived, would have been the most fortunate of men; perhaps, too fortunate, and that is why he was taken."

"Oh! do you think happiness can spoil our lives? I think misery does. My life, except for May, has been useless since my darling died."

"You speak of your life as though it were ended, when it has but just begun."

"I am thirty years old, Lord Eustace."

"What is thirty! You have many years of happiness, I trust, before you yet. You will begin a new life some day, Mrs. Power. Perhaps a brighter one than you have yet thought possible."

"Nothing could be brighter than the life that is ended."

"But you may be better fitted to enjoy the brightness. Depend upon it that, at fifteen years of age, we have not the capability of enjoying ourselves to the fullest extent."

"*I* had."

"You thought you had! You will live to be undeceived. I thought, a week ago, that Brussels held nothing to interest me. I am fain to confess already I was in the wrong. Who can tell what the future holds for him? You know the old saying, 'Nothing is certain but death.'"

"*Mothie darling, are you going to stand here all day?*" exclaimed May, as she skated up to me. "You know how you suffered last time you got chilled upon the ice. The Chesters are on the other side of the lake; and Jeanne d'Armville wants to know if I can go to tea there on Wednesday. Come and speak to them, mothie. Every one is asking where you are;" and, without further parley, May slipped her arm through mine, and, with a bow to Lord Eustace Annerley, we skated off together to join her friends. But I could not forget the words he had spoken to me. They rang in my ears for days afterward.

CHAPTER XXI.

INCONSTANCY.

Lord Eustace Annerley fulfilled his intention of returning to Ireland the following week; but I do not think I was much surprised to see him in Brussels again before the month was out. I believe I should have felt disappointed had he not come back—that I should have felt inclined to second May's assertion, that his professed attachment to my husband's memory was a mere farce—a compliment turned to suit the occasion—and have learned to despise him—as I have learned since. But at that time I could have sworn by every word he said. It was delightful to me to know some one who had been intimate with Hugh in his boyish days. It seemed as though, by Lord Eustace's side, I relived the happy, joyous past, and became young again over the recollections he evoked for me. True, that Juliet had often spoken to me of her brother; but then she was many years older than Hugh. She remembered him as a troublesome boy, but she had never been his companion; and, if she had, she could not, by reason of her sex, have entered into his thoughts and feelings as Lord Eustace Annerley appeared to have done. What tales he used to tell me of their schoolboy days, when Hugh stood so much in awe of his stern-hearted mother, and never looked for indulgence except from his father or his friends—of the rebel acts they committed

together, the poaching excursions, the boyish mutinies, the moonlight rambles with girls of ten and twelve!

"*Such* heroines for love romances!" Lord Eustace would exclaim; "such unfledged nestlings — such verdant, unripe fruit!"

Upon which I would remind him of *my* age when I was married, and sober him into an amendment of the personality.

"My dear Mrs. Power, you might have been twelve or two, for the matter of that; but at no period of your existence could you in any wise have resembled the young ladies of which I speak, one of whom, I believe, was the cheesemonger's daughter, and the other hailed as grandfather the daily postman."

"Well, I will try and not feel jealous of their memory, Lord Eustace," I would answer, laughing. "But it is a terrible revelation to hear that I was not the first."

"Whether you always have been, or always will be, a man's first love, Mrs. Power, it is impossible to say; but I think I can safely guarantee that it is with few men you would not be the last."

"At all events, I was poor Hugh's last," I answered, with a little sigh.

Looking back, how wonderful it seems to me that at any time I could have alluded to the greatest sorrow of my life in such trivial words as these! And yet has Hugh's death proved to be my greatest sorrow? His love was my greatest joy—for that I can answer. But loss of faith is worse than loss of life, and treachery outweighs bereavement.

Lord Eustace's intercourse with us continued to increase in intimacy, and my life became very bright by reason of his friendship. He was a man of a cultivated mind and a high order of intellect (which poor Hugh had never been); and, since it was the first occasion on which I had had an opportunity of close association with so gifted a companion, I enjoyed it accordingly. The only drawback to my pleasure was my child's indifference to our friend's society. May was no longer rude to him; on the contrary, they *were, to all outward appearances, on amicable terms together; but she suffered rather than encouraged his endeavors to gain her* good-will, and was always inclined to be silent and reserved in his presence.

More than once I mentioned the circumstance to Lord Eustace with regret; but he laughed at my annoyance, and said he had no desire to see my child's manner toward him altered.

"I am not sure that I do not like May all the better for showing her jealousy of me so openly."

"Her jealousy, Lord Eustace?"

"Certainly. By what other name should I call it? Your little girl is jealous that you should permit me to usurp any of the attention that she imagines belongs exclusively to herself; and I cannot but accept her perspicacity as a compliment."

"But I have never neglected my darling!" I exclaimed in distress. "I would give up every friend I have in the world sooner than she should think that."

"Excuse me for saying so, Mrs. Power, but there I think your affection would lead you astray. You have devoted the best years of your life to May—surely she might learn not to grudge you the slight consolation of a friend. Children get very *exigeants* in such matters, and the more you indulge them, the worse they become."

"I know that; but if May is a little *exigeante*, Lord Eustace, it is but natural. Remember we have been all in all to one another."

"But will you always remain so?"

"I hope we shall. I should be indeed miserable if there were a doubt of it."

"What—when May is married?"

"She may not marry; but, if she does, why should she desert her mother?"

"She will not desert you; but she cannot live with you, neither will you retain the chief place in her confidence. It would be wrong to wish it. You yourself will be the first to tell your daughter to confide in her husband, as you confided in Hugh."

"O Lord Eustace! pray don't talk of such things. I know it's all true, but it makes me so miserable."

"I am sorry for that; but it is surely wise to look the inevitable in the face. You cannot prevent it. And then, when May is gone, and her thoughts are filled with her

husband and children, what is to become of you—left to live out the remainder of your life alone, without any nearer friends than the chance acquaintances of the hour?"

"Why should I not have friends?"

"You might command any number, I should imagine; but if you discard them now because May (who, like all children, is intensely selfish) objects to any one occupying your time or attention but herself, how can you be sure of recalling them in the hour of need?"

"But I don't mean to discard them," I said softly.

"It will go hard with you, poor child, if you do," he answered in the same tone. "Your heart was made for affection, Katie. Without something to cling to, it would wither and perish; and if you had not had May to lavish your love upon, you would have married again long ago."

"Oh, no!" I began eagerly; but the asseveration died upon my tongue.

"I am very glad you didn't," said Lord Eustace meaningly—too meaningly, perhaps he thought, for a second afterward he added, "because in that case perhaps *monsieur le mari* would have objected to my being your friend and giving you good advice."

"He would have been very silly if he had," I answered, more to conceal my confusion than to make a foolish speech.

"Well, let us be thankful that we have no need to ask his opinion on the subject," said Lord Eustace; which enabled me, under cover of a laugh, to turn the subject.

But I could not be quite blind to what was coming, nor remain ignorant of the fact that Lord Eustace Annerley seized every possible occasion to show that he considered me in something more than the light of a friend.

The first revelation with regard to my own feelings came to me in a letter from my sister-in-law, Mrs. Delancey. I had, of course, spoken of Lord Eustace in my letters home; indeed in the beginning of our intimacy I had almost transcribed the conversations we had together, and taken no pains to conceal that our friendship progressed favorably; but I had known him for more than twelve months before Juliet wrote thus to me:

"*Your description of* the beautiful presents Lord Eustace Annerley gave May on New-Year's day made my little daughter's mouth water. What an agreeable person he seems to be! What a pity he is not a Catholic! I suppose, under the circumstances, mamma would not like the marriage. But you must be aware, Katie, that he would prove an excellent match for May. If he lives he must come into the title, and his estates are situated in the best part of Ireland. He hasn't much money, it is true, but then she will have plenty, and so that would not signify. And the child is getting on—you mustn't forget that. She will be sixteen—will she not?—on her next birthday. Does she seem at all taken with him? I conclude he must be so with her, else why these attentions? They can hardly be laid entirely on the score of friendship. I hope Lord Eustace may be all you think him, for the dear child's sake."

The letter dropped from my hands, leaving me almost powerless to think or feel.

Was it—*could* it be true that Eustace's attentions were really due to *May*—that he regarded my child as if she were a woman—that he liked me only because I was her mother? Even in my anxiety to know the truth I did not realize my true feelings respecting him. I believed that I was solely actuated by interest in the future welfare of my child. I did not think I could be mistaken, but I *might* be; and I expended all my energy in inventing means by which the truth might be ascertained without a betrayal of my motive in seeking it. The opportunity came soon enough. It was a beautiful summer evening, and we were all attending one of the open-air concerts in the park; May—her arms linked in those of two of her bosom friends—was flitting through the lamplit paths, an incarnation of youth, and health, and merriment.

"How the child grows!" said Lord Eustace as she ran across our path.

"She does indeed. One can hardly call her a child now. She was fifteen on her last birthday."

"Fifteen! What is fifteen? An infant. And, notwithstanding her rapid growth, I think May is rather childish for her age."

"She has lived so much alone with me

I pleaded. "Yet many girls are married at fifteen."

"*You* were, Mrs. Power; but I think it is the exception rather than the rule. And I, for one—saving your presence—do not envy the taste of the man who breaks through it."

"Why, I flattered myself you rather admired my May," I replied, with a nervous laugh.

"Admire her! So I do. I admire that fat baby in the perambulator also, but I have no ambition to become his proprietor, if that is what you mean; though I like children in their proper place."

"Now I won't have my May compared to that red-faced baby, Lord Eustace," I replied, secretly flattered. "Whatever *you* may think, she is fast approaching womanhood, and if—if—I know that if—"

"If—what?"

"If any one—any man, like yourself, for instance, were to admire her a great deal, or seem to pay her unusual attention, I should—"

"You would ask him his intentions. Bravo! Mrs. Power. Why, you're developing into a regular dragon. But has any one presumed?"

"Oh! no. Only you talk as if she were such a baby, and yet you say you admire her. And I know people think—"

"What do they think?"

"That you like May," I answered, breaking off in the most feeble manner possible and wishing earnestly I had never begun.

"Oh!" said Lord Eustace; and for a moment he said nothing more. Then he added, "And what do you think?"

"Oh! nothing—nothing, of course."

"*Nothing?* What an empty little head yours must be! You never think—*par exemple*—that, though I admire her very much and love her a little, hers is for me but a reflected glory."

I was silent.

"You never think that all my thoughts are devoted to and all my wishes concentrated in another person—not so very far *from May or me at the present* moment—and *that I should have a very particular objection, in consequence, to your bringing that* visionary admirer of May's to the point in the strong-minded manner you threatened just now."

"But why?" I inquired, laughing, glad of an opportunity to change the subject, though my heart was bounding in my bosom at the implication I could not pretend to overlook. "Why shouldn't my dear, sweet May be married, when you say it would make no earthly difference to you?"

"Oh! excuse me; I never said that. It would make a great deal of difference. Do you want to see me a grandfather before my time?"

I had not had a moment in which to reply to his words—to find fault with them, or to pretend to misunderstand them—when May came dancing up to us alone.

"They've gone home," she said, alluding to her friends; "and they want us to follow them, and have supper there. Will you come, mothie?"

I clung to her arm tightly. I was trembling with a new, delicious joy. I would have given worlds to be able to go to my own home and ruminate in quiet over the discovery I had just made; but I was excited and agitated, and I hardly knew what I wanted, or what would be best to do.

"Oh! yes, dear, of course," I answered, "if you wish to go. Are you happy, May? Have you been enjoying yourself, my own child?"

"Very much, mothie. Did you hear that last song? It was charming. But how you are shivering! Are you cold?"

"Not cold, dearest, only a little tired; but I am very, very happy," I added in a whisper. I felt as if I could not keep my happiness a secret from her even for a moment.

"You have been standing too long," said Lord Eustace, in a low voice. "Take my arm, *Katie*."

He drew my hand through his as he spoke, and pressed it firmly with a sense of proprietorship that thrilled me with pleasure. So he walked to the house of May's young friends, and there we parted, without further comment, but with a perfect understanding.

How long the next two hours seemed to me! How tedious the supper meal! how

mawkish and uninteresting the general conversation!

"You're not well, mothie darling," said May, as we walked home together. "You did not seem to be listening to anything that was said to you this evening; and now I feel your hands they are very hot. Have you a headache? What is the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter, my child," I answered, "excepting that I am tired, and want to get to bed and to sleep."

But notwithstanding my expressed anxiety, I sat up for hours after May was slumbering, thinking over the wonderful revelation that had been made to me—not by Lord Eustace, but by my own heart.

He loved me. I had suspected it for some time past, and there was no doubt of it now! but what seemed far more marvelous to me was, that I *loved him.*

And when I had once made the discovery, oh! how very much I felt I loved him!

The first feeling with which this truth overwhelmed me was that of shame. I had broken my troth with Hugh!

For a few moments the thought of dear dead Hugh, mouldering in his coffin in Père-la-Chaise, made me shrink and tremble; and I was ready to appeal to him for forgiveness that I should have dreamed of permitting another man to fill his place, and be a father to his child. But there is no such cunning sophistry as that of love. The memory of Hugh was sixteen years old; and the echo of Lord Eustace's words had hardly died away. So I thought and thought, until I persuaded myself that Hugh would have been the first to rejoice that his child and widow should find a protector in his dear old friend, and that he could never wish me to pass through life unloved and lonely.

"I am still young," I argued with myself; "I was only thirty-one last May, and Eustace says he does not care even to talk to a woman who is under thirty; and I have lived a very lonely, colorless life until now. When I look back I can hardly understand how I *can* have lived so many years with only a child's company to cheer me. And May may marry any day. In fact she *will* marry —there is *no doubt of it*—as soon as she is *introduced into society*; and then what am *I* to do, left all by myself, widowed and childless?"

Here the idea of losing my May, even amid all the advantages of a life with Eustace Annerley, brought the tears to my eyes; but I brushed them away. "I won't be foolish," I said, resolutely, "and cry for what may never come to pass. And if it does, I shall have Eustace!"

The thought of "Eustace" was already beginning to have power to swallow up the lesser feelings. Love is such a tyrant that when it is actively working in the spirit, its light quenches all other. It *will* be heard and seen and felt. Troubles may not vanish before its presence, but they dull and dwindle; and it holds a panacea for all. The light of love was kindled in my bosom now —for the first time as a woman feels it—and I turned faint and sick with the weight of happiness laid upon me, and almost delirious at the thought of what the future would bring. I, who had believed my life was ended, who had believed I could never know the sensation of joy again—the delight of being loved—I had a lover—was to have a husband—to pass once more through all the intoxicating pleasures of a young married life—to be courted and envied and *fêted*—the centre of attraction—the one person in the world for Eustace, his friend and confidante and wife!

"The one person in the world for Eustace." These words recalled me to myself. What, then, was to become of May? What part was Hugh's child to bear in this contemplated companionship?

Even at that moment my heart cried out against the idea of separation, even in thought, from my darling. If the new arrangement—and though Lord Eustace had not actually spoken the words which were to bind me to himself, I divined so well his intentions respecting me there was no need to wait for them—if the new arrangement was in any way to interfere in my intercourse with my child, it must never come to pass. Above and beyond all other things was to be considered—May.

I might be able to break my heart in silence, to go back to the old simple round of duty, which looked so dull beside the bril

iant picture my lover's words conjured up before me; but I would not separate from my daughter. That fact was fixed from the beginning, and irrevocably. But I asked myself, "Why should I? No one could be kinder to May than Eustace. No one admired the child, in a childish way, more than he did, nor was so anxious to minister to her pleasure or comply with her wishes. He had often told me that in another year or two she would be one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. And surely it would be an advantage to her—dear, darling child!—to secure a constant protector and friend in her step-father—some one to battle for her through life against herself and others—some one to love and comfort her, if I should be called away."

As with the rapidity of a vivid imagination I instantly pictured myself an interesting corpse, with Eustace and May sobbing over me, I wondered how I could have ever contemplated running the risk of leaving my sweet girl to the tender mercies of her stiff old grandmother and prim maiden aunts, and felt as though I ought not to lose an hour in providing her with so charming a legal protector as Lord Eustace Annerley.

I can write lightly of these things now; but I did not think lightly of them then.

The next subject to be considered was May's own feeling in the matter, and this I determined to ascertain as speedily as possible. I was pleased to remember that Lord Eustace was spending a few days in Paris. We were so intimate, and our mutual understanding was so evident, that he was not likely to broach the proposal, which had been trembling on his tongue when we parted, by letter, but would speak of it when we met again. Meanwhile I should have prepared my dear child's mind for what would doubtless prove a surprise, but, I felt sure, a pleasant surprise to her, and be able to tell Lord Eustace, when he put the question plainly to me, that my own child—*our* child!—would be as ready to welcome him as a father as I was as a husband.

Ah! lovely dreams, like those induced by *the pleasant poison that* first intoxicates and *then destroys us!* Why must we suffer so much in this world for being a little happy? Why were we ever born, or thrown together, to make each other so wonderfully miserable?

CHAPTER XXII.

REPENTANCE.

It must have been early morning before I crept into bed by my daughter's side. Even then I could not sleep, but lay, silent and happy, conning over and over again the words in which I should divulge the truth to her, devising plans by which to bring the subject easily about, and picturing to myself first her surprise, and then the perfect peace into which my assurances of maternal love would soothe her. I grew quite cunning in those waking hours, forming little plots by which to beguile May into putting some question that should render my task less difficult, and even anticipated the possibility of cheating her into asking me, for *her* sake, to yield to the solicitations of our best friend.

The morning found me pale and anxious, but very hopeful. May found out that I had not slept well, and tried to persuade me to remain in bed; but I was too excited and eager to attain my end to feel otherwise than restless. My child was now my constant companion. She had left off attending the convent, except for one or two special classes, and usually accompanied me wherever I went. The occasion I had been trying to make occurred almost naturally before breakfast was over, at which time May sprung to her feet and rushed to the window.

"Carriages, mothie dear. Why, a wedding, I do declare! Do you know who is going to be married this morning, Célestine?" she continued, addressing a servant who was in the room.

"Madame Fradelle, to some English gentleman," replied the maid.

"Madame Fradelle! What! the little stumpy woman who keeps the girls' school? Well, some people have strange tastes."

"One of the marriages you don't approve of—eh, May?" I inquired nervously.

"Why shouldn't I approve, mothie? If the English gentleman, whoever he may be, likes a little stumpy woman, what concern is it of mine?"

"But she is a widow, you know, my dear. Second marriages are what you are always so bitter against."

May turned sharp around from the window, and looked me full in the face.

"But she hasn't any children, mothie."

"What difference should that make, dear? If Madame Fradelle had some poor little fatherless children, there would be all the more reason for her to think of them and their comfort."

"It would be a strange way of comforting the children, to give them a step-father," said May shortly.

"What!—to work for them, and love them, and protect them, May?"

"I don't think step-fathers often love their step-children. They seem much more likely to consider them in the way. Emma Hayes's mother's husband, Mr. Rolston, is horrible. He doesn't like the children even to be in the room; and if their mamma tells them they may do a thing, he says directly that they sha'n't. Emma hates him more every day."

"But, my darling, Mr. Rolston must be an exception to the rule. There are bad and unpleasant people in every condition of life. You must not judge all step-fathers by him."

"Well, it can't make any difference to me, so I don't care what they're like," replied my daughter indifferently; but she did not appear to forget the conversation, the subject of which cropped up continually during the next few hours, keeping me in constant torture.

I sighed heavily, and for the present said no more. It was not a very promising beginning. The old prejudice, of which I had heard so little during the last twelvemonth that I had hoped it was forgotten, was apparently in full force. And, added to it, May seemed to have grown suspicious. During all that day she kept on alluding to Emma Hayes's step-father and Madame Fradelle's folly, *until she goaded* me into replying. *With the strain on my mind*, occasioned by the knowledge of my secret hope, it was difficult to listen to my child's remarks and be silent. I felt as though I must ascertain the worst at once, or die. So, as she was animadverting strongly on the uncomfortable position of Emma Hayes and the anxiety she displayed to leave home, I said, with a violent effort at cheerfulness:

"It's a pity in that case that your friend doesn't marry. Since she so greatly disapproves of her mother's choice, she might be happier in a choice of her own."

"No one has asked her," replied May, bluntly.

"Indeed! I am surprised to hear that, such a pretty girl as she is, and her step-father holding so good a position in Brussels. What is her age?"

"She is nearly twenty."

"Then it'll come soon enough, no doubt. The young men of Brussels would not show such bad taste as to leave so good-looking a girl in the lurch."

"But where are the young men?" asked May, with a smile.

She had reason in putting the question. Brussels is a very charming city to visit—some find it very pleasant to live in—but for English girls it is not a marrying-place. There are scarcely any Englishmen there. Such as are met occasionally are but birds of passage, with neither the thought, the opportunity, nor the means to take to themselves wives. I knew that well enough, of course, but I had an object in introducing the subject, and I thought that I had gained it.

"I see plenty wherever I go," I answered.

"Only Belgians; and Emma wouldn't marry a foreigner for anything."

"Mr. Welham is an Englishman."

"I know he is, and sixty years of age into the bargain."

"There's young Locock!"

"Eighteen last birthday, and a clerk in a counting-house. No, mothie; I don't think Emma would thank you for him."

"Well, what would she think of Lord Eustace. He is English, and well off, and not bad-looking. Wouldn't he suit Miss Hayes's taste?"

"Lord Eustace!" exclaimed May.

"Yes, Lord Eustace," I returned, with a nervous laugh; "what is there to object to in him?"

"I don't know what there is to object to, but I hope to goodness Emma would never think of marrying *him*," said May, determinately.

"I don't suppose he is likely to ask her," I replied; "but why you should object to her making an excellent match I can't imagine."

"Because I love her, mothie. She was my best friend at the convent."

"And so you would like to prevent her making a most enviable marriage?"

"*Enviable*, mothie? Why, you have always preached so much to me against marrying for wealth or position!"

"And has Lord Eustace Annerley no other attractions, then?"

"Oh! he's well enough, I suppose; and I acknowledge he's very kind in giving away presents, and paying compliments, and all that sort of thing. But I wouldn't have Emma marry him for all the world."

"O May, you are too hard!" I cried, battling against a disposition to burst into tears. "When you have lived a little longer you will learn how to appreciate the spontaneous kindness of a friend."

"I don't say anything against him as a *friend*, mothie," replied May, pointedly; "but you spoke of Emma marrying him."

"Well, and if she *did* marry him she might consider herself uncommonly lucky," I said, with some amount of temper; "but it's not in the slightest degree likely that he will ever so far honor her as to give her the chance."

"And a good thing for her that it's not likely," returned May; "she might be silly enough to take him."

This was too much for me. I could stand it no longer. I should have betrayed myself had I remained in the room another moment, so I rose and left it.

Sitting by myself, I wondered how it could be that Eustace failed to attract my child's fancy. To my eyes he appeared, in every way, so lovable. He was a perfect gentleman—a thorough courtier—a man whom I believe incapable of behaving otherwise than kindly and well to any creature less powerful than himself—before all to a child and woman thrown upon his protection. His honor and position in society were unassailable. He was a man to be proud of—to be proud of belonging to. Why was May's heart alone closed to all this? Was it a real and permanent dislike to Lord Eustace that actuated her remarks upon the subject? or was it but a frivolous fancy, begot of some childish affront, mixed up with childish jealousy? I felt that it behooved me to ascertain, and before Eustace should return from Paris. I hoped against hope that a few plain words might dissipate the cloud which hung between my child and me upon this subject; but if they did not—if I should find that her ill-feeling for him was too deeply rooted for any persuasion of mine to cure, I felt there was but one course open to me.

I had been faithless to Hugh, but I would not be faithless to his child. If, by any act of mine, I caused even a shadow to flit across our happy home, or set my daughter's thoughts upon the possibility of escaping from it, I should never forgive myself; and, what was to me of infinite more importance, I felt sure that Hugh would never forgive me—that we should meet in the vast shades of eternity, not with glad recognition and unclouded hearts, but for me an averted countenance, and for him the stern question: "How have you fulfilled the sacred trust I left you?"

Even in that moment, when my poor heart was fluttering at the idea of possible delight and sinking beneath the prospect of probable disappointment, I thank God that I still thought more of May than of Eustace—more of my dead Hugh than of either of them. I felt very downcast and subdued for the remainder of the day, and when the evening came I refused to take my customary walk in the public gardens. May would not leave the house without me, but sat on a stool at my feet (her favorite position) with her head resting against my knee. I had been making up my mind to broach the subject again on which we disagreed, and go to the point boldly. So that, when I spoke,

it was without preface, though with an effort.

"May darling, I want to talk to you seriously. Tell me the truth. Why do you dislike Lord Eustace Annerley?"

"I don't dislike him, mothie."

"My dear, that is an evasion. You *do* dislike him—there is no doubt of that, from the animus you display whenever his good qualities are mentioned."

"I don't like to hear you praise him, if that's what you mean."

"But why not?"

"Well, it's not pleasant for a girl who's been always with her mother to have a man come and stick himself up as chief friend, and then for you to have no eyes or ears for any one else when he's in the room. It's enough to make one hate him. I dare say he's well enough, and I shouldn't mind if he was like other people; but why should he come here every day in the week, and walk in and out of the house like a tame cat?"

She spoke jerkily, and rather unwillingly, as if the truth were being forced from her and she was uncertain how I should receive it; but I understood what she meant. Her sentences were clumsy, her grammar questionable; but I knew that my child had an inkling of the impending state of affairs, and was fighting with the unwelcome conviction.

She was jealous of my affection. I had let my darling see how engrossed I was with this man's attentions, and think herself neglected in consequence. Oh, how ashamed I felt before her! How anxious I was to disabuse her mind of the idea—to make her believe she had been mistaken!

"My own child!" I exclaimed, with crimson cheeks, "how can you talk such nonsense? Lord Eustace is very kind to both of us, and you know the reason why. It is on account of his old friendship for your father. But had he thought he was intruding, I am sure he would never come here so often. He sees we are two idle, lonely women, and he visits us with the view of enlivening our solitude."

"Does he stay in Brussels for our sakes also?" inquired May. "His family live in Wicklow, *don't they?*"

"*I believe so; but* Lord Eustace has always lived more or less abroad. Any way, we have no right to question his actions. But I cannot see how his intimacy here affects you, May, or your feeling for him. He has always been exceedingly kind to you, and even if you do not care for him, I don't see why you should dislike him."

My child sighed, more deeply, I think, than I had ever heard her sigh before.

"How am I to explain it to you, mothie? I see that Lord Eustace is gentlemanly, and polite and amiable, but I don't trust him; I don't think he is earnest or true. He is full of talk and palaver; and I dare say he likes us well enough—why should he not? you have been kindness itself to him—but there is a look in his eyes that I can't get over—and—and *I do wish he wasn't such a friend of yours, dear mothie!*"

She pressed her cheek against my knee as she spoke, and looked up into my face with such sweet, beseeching eyes that I felt every hope I had cherished flutter, like wounded birds, upon the ground—and die. And yet I could not hear her speak of him so without saying one word in his defense.

"May, my darling, you are utterly mistaken. You are very young, remember, and have not had the same opportunities of reading character that I have. I assure you Lord Eustace is true and open as the day. He may not speak so unreservedly as many of your acquaintances—he is no longer a young man, and has learned, probably, to keep his opinions in general to himself; but he is very clever and intellectual, and perfectly polished. As for his personal appearance, that is of course a matter of taste; but to imagine there is anything sinister in the look of his eyes is absurd—utterly absurd—and only a child would have made so foolish a remark. His eyes are beautiful—splendid! They are the most striking feature he possesses."

I paused for a reply, but May made none. I placed my hand lovingly upon her head, and smoothed her hair as I went on again.

"It is cruel to judge a friend's character from his outward appearance, May. If so good-looking a man as Lord Eustace cannot escape your criticism, how would a poor cripple fare at your hands? And Lor

Eustace possesses what is immeasurably above beauty in value: a cultivated mind and noble birth. He is a friend to look up to and be proud of. There are few women who would not be inclined to envy you the possession of him even as a friend, while in the position of a nearer and dearer companion, he—"

"Mother!" cried May suddenly, as she started up and confronted me. "Mother, darling! oh, don't say that you want *me* to marry him!"

The entreaty was so abrupt, the climax she had reached so puzzling, that, under any circumstances, I should have found it difficult to answer her. But, beneath her surprise and curiosity and alarm, I perceived so evidently the deeper feeling—that of dislike and enmity—that my heart sickened at the task imposed on me, and the certainty which the future was assuming.

"My own child, you frighten me by your energy. No! no! of course not! Is it likely I should wish you to marry a person you are averse to—that I should ever wish you to marry at all? If the opportunity comes, my darling, with the prospect of making you happier than you are with me, well and good; but I could never bring myself willingly to contemplate our separation; far less to try and bring it about before the time."

"That's all right, then," commenced May, resuming her old position; "for I never *will* leave you, darling! It would break my heart. As it would to know that any one came between us," she added in a lower tone.

"No one can ever do that, May. We are *one*—one heart and one mind—for time and eternity. But to love another person does not necessarily infer a breach of loyalty to our first friends. If you fall in love (as I dare say you will some day, notwithstanding your protestations to the contrary), I shall not be jealous. I shall be very glad to know my child has an additional source of happiness, and I shall pray God to preserve it to her. And so with yourself. You would not be so selfish as to wish me to give up all my friends because I possess your affection. You will always be the very first consideration in the world to me; but I can still enjoy the pleasure of friendship. Do you understand me?"

"Oh! I don't mind *friends*," said May irrelevantly.

"Then you will try to feel more kindly toward Lord Eustace Annerley. For *my* sake—will you, May?"

She did not answer, and I repeated in a coaxing voice:

"You will try to love him for my sake, won't you, darling?"

But to my consternation I found that she was in tears.

"My own child! what is the matter?"

"O mother, mother!" she exclaimed between her sobs, "I will be friendly with him or any one you like, only—don't—*don't* love them better than you do me, mother! for I couldn't bear it. It would break my heart!"

"May, May! how can you think I would?"

"Don't let them come between us, mother! Don't let them be always in the house, and insisting upon going with us everywhere. Let us be sometimes alone, mother darling, as we used to be long ago, before—we knew—any of them."

She spoke in the plural number, but my guilty conscience told me too well her words pointed to but one, and that one Lord Eustace Annerley.

"Why, what a jealous little toad it is!" I said, trying to laugh away her despondent mood. "Whatever would you have done if your mother had gone and married again, as ninety-nine women in a hundred left in her position would have done?"

"I would have *hated* him!" replied May, with fixed teeth. "I would never have spoken to him. I would have been his enemy from the moment he entered the house. I would have killed him—if I could."

"But that would be unreasonable—wicked. You would not feel so now, my child," I said hurriedly. "You are older—more sensible. You would not act so foolish a part—if it were possible for you to be so tried—now!"

I was looking in her face earnestly—anxiously. On her answer I felt my fate was hanging

"I should be worse now," answered May, with excitement. "I must always be the same to you, dear mother. Nothing could alter that. But if you were to marry again —oh! I am so thankful there is no chance of it—but if you were—"

"What—what, May?"

"I should go away. I couldn't bear it. I should go to grandmamma."

"And leave me, darling? O May! I did not think you could be so cruel."

"Mother, I only said '*if*'—and there is no '*if*.' Don't speak of it again. Why should we discuss an impossibility? And the mere mention of it makes me miserable."

"It would make you *very, very* miserable; you are sure of that, May?" I said interrogatively.

"It would break my heart!" she repeated. "I would not stay to see it. I would go away, and never come back again!"

I turned from her with a white face, for I felt that it was over. *This* was a contingency I dared not even contemplate; and I knew May's impulsive but determined character (so like her father's) was not likely to change a resolution once entered upon.

So I crept about my usual occupations, and the name of Lord Eustace Annerley was not revived between us. I think my child saw that she had hurt me, though I thank God she never knew how much; but we were both very silent for the remainder of the evening, and only showed our remembrance of the conversation which we had held by an extra share of caresses and endearments.

We sought our bedchamber together, but when May was asleep I stole down-stairs again to the drawing-room, and sat in the moonlight thinking how I should best act with reference to the trial that lay before me. That it was a trial, and a very severe one, I never for a moment attempted to disguise from myself; but at the same time I did not dream of wavering in the duty that lay before me. I *would* be faithful to the trust that Hugh had left me.

I knew that if, when Eustace spoke to me, I refused him on the score of May's dislike, he would never leave us alone until he had *successfully combated* either her resolve *or mine.*

The only means by which I could prevent this would be to pretend I did not wish to marry him.

He would call me a jilt and a coquette—untrue, unloving, unstable—a million of hard things, perhaps; but the fact remained that I could not be his wife, and he must never know the real reason of my rejection. It was very bitter for me to sit and fancy what he would think, when in my heart I knew how ready I was to love him. But May's threat sounded in my ears, and I was resolute.

When I had once made up my mind I could no longer stay by myself. I felt I must fly to my child, and find the comfort I needed for my sacrifice in her arms. She had not wakened at my absence. She was still lying with her fair face turned toward my pillows, and one arm thrown out as though she had been seeking for me. My entrance made her stir, and she commenced to murmur some half-articulate words. Perhaps it was the subject of her dreams that bubbled to her lips.

"*Don't*, mother!" she said, imploringly; "don't go away from me! It would break my heart!"

I bent over her and took her in my arms, and registered a vow that I would never go away. I had made my resolution, too, and I would keep to it. Living or dying, I belonged to Hugh's child, thenceforward and forever. No one should ever come between us again. Never more! No! never, never more!

CHAPTER XXIII.

ATONEMENT.

THE next few days strengthened instead of weakening my resolution. May did not recover her spirits. She appeared unusually grave and silent, and went about her studies and occupations in an aimless, uninterested manner that cut me to the heart. I tried every device I could think of—short of confessing my weakness—to induce her to feel the same confidence in me that sh had formerly done, but it had evide

been shaken, and time alone would restore it.

I could see her eager eyes scrutinizing the handwriting on my letters to detect if any one of them appeared to interest me more than another, and she seemed almost unwilling to leave me alone, lest some one should come in her absence and claim a promise from me that I might be unable afterward to break.

At least, so I interpreted her jealous watchfulness; although I had good reason afterward for believing that, though my child may have been startled by the new idea I had put into her head, she did not go so far as to imagine there was anything more than friendship between Lord Eustace Annerley and myself. So much the better. How thankful I have been since to think she never knew the extent of the sacrifice I made for her!

Still—while I loved her more (if possible) for her devotion to myself, and felt that the possession of no man on earth was worth even so small a particle of her complete faith and confidence in me—her manner so pained me that I longed, at last, for Lord Eustace to return and speak to me in such a way as should authorize my telling him that our acquaintanceship must cease. I did not realize the after-pain this step would cause me. May's despondency so grieved me, that I thought only of the quickest means by which to cure her. I was like a patient about to undergo some horrible and inevitable operation, who feels that, come what may, the sooner it is over the better. I was like a soldier who, excited by the raging battle, forgets the bullets flying like hail around him in his anxiety to see the enemy turn and fly. There have been cases in which men, in the midst of carnage, have received flesh wounds of which they felt nothing until they sat down afterward, all the fury and excitement spent, and, essaying to remove their clothing, found, by the faintness that overpowered them, the blood by which they were stained, that they had not passed through the fire *unscathed.*

* * * * *

May was at the convent the morning that Lord Eustace returned. How grateful I was, as I heard his voice in the hall below, to remember that she was absent! For I felt sure that within the next hour my fate would be determined.

He entered the room joyously—confidently—as if he already knew himself to be master there.

I received him as best I could. I do not care to remember now how much he had the power to make my pulses quicken and my blood run.

"Did you expect me home before?" he inquired, when the first greeting had passed between us. He had been absent five days.

"Oh, no! why should I?"

"Because you must be aware I should never have staid away so long from choice. But one of my friends died just as I arrived in Paris (friends have an awkward habit of dying at inconvenient times, you know), and the relations pressed me to stay to the funeral. I couldn't well refuse, I had eaten so many of the poor old fellow's dinners!"

"You were quite right to stay. It is not much to do for one who has been kind to you."

"But it was a great nuisance! I was annoyed at having to go at all, and would have returned at once if I could. My heart was here all the time! Were you surprised that I did not write to you?"

He had drawn his chair very near mine as he put this question. I tried to answer it indifferently.

"Not at all! I should have been very much surprised if you had. I am not an advocate for indiscriminate correspondence."

"I know you are not, but my letter would have been very discriminate. Indeed I intended writing at first in order to send you a little present I had done myself the pleasure to procure you on my arrival, but afterward I was advised not to trust it to the post. However, I hope it will prove to you, however late, that with you and me the saying holds good, 'Loin des yeux, près du cœur!'"

He drew a case from his pocket as he spoke, and, opening it, displayed one of the prettiest and most fanciful sets of ornaments I had ever seen. There, on their bed of vel-

vet, lay necklace, ear-rings, brooch, and bracelet, formed of clusters of forget-me-nots and leaves wrought in blue enamel and gold. They were so elegant, and, to me, at that time, so novel, that I could not help giving vent to a note of admiration.

"I am so glad you like them," said Lord Eustace, as he placed the case in my hand. "I wanted them to say for me, what I am thankful to be able to say now for myself, that during my absence you have never once been out of my thoughts."

But I had remembered my part by that time, and I pushed the offering gently away again.

"You are very good," I murmured, "but I cannot take them."

"You cannot take them!" he echoed in surprise. "Oh, you *must!* I got them expressly for you! Say you will take them," he added, more persuasively, "and wear them for my sake!"

"But I never wear ornaments, Lord Eustace."

"You do! I've seen you wear some very fine pearls."

"They are an heirloom—an old aunt's present," I replied evasively.

"Then try and look upon me as an old uncle," he said, in a way that made me laugh, spite of myself; "don't say that you'll refuse them."

"I never wear colors."

"But surely it is time you did. You are not going to remain in black all your life. A day is coming when you will put on something brighter and lighter, Katie—when you will let me persuade you to doff your mourning robes once and forever, and to—"

I knew what was coming. I saw the words trembling on his lips. All my anxiety was to prevent their being actually spoken.

"Lord Eustace," I exclaimed hurriedly, "I know what you are going to say. *Pray don't say it!* It is of no use. I shall never change my black dress now, any more than I shall change my state of widowhood."

He stared at me in unmitigated astonishment. I saw the color recede from his countenance as though *he had* experienced some *violent shock.*

"You are not in earnest," he said, after a moment's pause; "you are jesting with me."

"Indeed I am not. Is it likely I should jest on so serious a subject?"

"But what has happened to make you change your mind? Who has been here during my absence?"

"No one! What authority had you for ever thinking I had a different mind upon the subject?"

"You did not say so, I am aware; but I thought—I hoped—O Katie!" he went on passionately, "think again! Say that I might have some chance of making you reconsider your resolution—that the love—the devotion of my lifetime—"

"Lord Eustace!" I exclaimed, rising in my agitation and moving to the opposite side of the room, "I entreat of you to say no more! It was to prevent your saying so much that I spoke as I did. I will be candid with you. I understand what you feel, and I have sounded my own heart upon the subject, and come to the conclusion that any dereliction from the condition of life I have decided to maintain would not be for my happiness, or that of any one connected with me."

"But this is delusion—insanity!" he exclaimed. "To take vows of perpetual widowhood at your age! What is your age? One-and-thirty! And you are in the zenith of your womanhood. Do you intend to live all the long, long years before you—twenty—thirty—forty perhaps—unloved—unprotected—and alone?"

"I have my child," I murmured.

"But how long will you keep her? She is to be introduced next season—is she not?—as the greatest heiress in Ireland. How many months do you suppose will elapse before she is 'wooed, and married, and a'?'"

"Oh, don't speak of it!" I cried, covering up my face with my hands. It seemed very bitter to me, at that moment, to think that I might relinquish my own happiness for next to nothing—a few months of quiet comfort — and then separation, and two homes, and divided interests between my child and me!

"I must speak of it, Katie! I will

speak of it! It is unnatural that you should keep faithful longer to a memory, or an imaginary duty. Hugh was a dear, good fellow, but he is gone beyond the reach of enjoying your company, and I cannot see how you can profit him by making yourself miserable."

"It is not only that."

"What else is it?"

"There are several reasons. One is—the difference in our religions."

"That is not likely to affect us. I should let you follow your own inclinations in that respect, as in every other."

"But I should not feel the same about it."

"I don't follow you."

"We could not observe the same practices, attend the same church, pray together," I replied, in a low voice.

His handsome lip curled. I knew that he thought very little of the importance of prayer or any other religious duty.

"We can pray for each other — if an amount of praying is conducive to happiness in the married state. Won't that do as well?"

I shook my head mournfully.

"Pray—*pray*—don't say any more! I have thought it all over—I have, indeed; and I have quite made up my mind. I shall never be otherwise than I am."

"You will never be my wife, you mean. Put it plainly, if you please!"

"I shall never be the wife of any one—any more."

"You do not care for me, then. You have been trifling with me, Mrs. Power!"

How my heart cried out "No!" but I dared not give it utterance. I had foreseen, from two or three passages that had passed between us, that it must come to this—that I must either tell the truth, or let him believe I was a deceiver.

"Yes! I suppose I have been trifling with you—if you call it trifling," I replied.

"*If I call it trifling!*" he said, fiercely; "by what name do you call it yourself? Have you forgotten the numberless instances *in which, if you have not* actually responded *to, you have at least* permitted me to act in *a manner which should* have left no doubt of my intentions on your mind? Do you mean to pretend that you are unaware of that which your least intimate acquaintance seems to know—the reason of my prolonged stay in Brussels? But doubtless you will say you are unaware—that you have forgotten. Women of your calibre are generally gifted with the most convenient of memories and understandings. But I didn't believe it of you, Katie—I didn't believe it *of you!*"

There was so much pathos in the tone in which he uttered the last words that my eyes brimmed over.

"Don't think so badly of me!" I exclaimed. "I do—I have always liked you extremely as a friend; but we should not be happy otherwise, indeed we should not!"

"Who is it that has come between us?" he said, shortly.

"No one."

"I don't believe it!"

"Lord Eustace!"

"It does not sound polite, I dare say, but in some instances truth is preferable to politeness. I repeat my question, who is the man that has come between us?"

"You are determined to know?"

"I have a right to be told!"

"Then it is Hugh! Hugh only! Believe me or not, as you will, Lord Eustace, this is the truth! I do like you—"

"Not more than 'like?'" he inquired, with an upward glance.

"I do like you," I repeated firmly, "and the evidences of your regard flattered me. But when I came to consider the matter more attentively, with a view to any closer connection than that of friendship between us, I saw plainly that it could not be—that as I am now, so I must remain till it pleases God to call me hence."

"I will make you alter your resolution," he said, determinately.

"You never will. And in proof of it, I am going to ask you not to remain in Brussels, or you will compel me to leave it."

"Is the very sight of me obnoxious to you, then?"

"Not so; but it is better we should not meet—at all events for a time. Meeting will only revive unpleasant recollections, and

prevent our falling back into our old position as friends."

"So I am banished?"

"I don't like to hear you use that word. If it is inconvenient to you to leave, I will take my child to Paris."

"By no means! I have been the one to blame, it appears, and therefore it is but fair I should be the one to suffer. I shall not trouble you with my presence or my importunities again, Mrs. Power!"

"Oh, don't be angry!" I said, with a huge lump in my throat, as he prepared to quit the room.

He must have heard the tears in my voice, but he did not notice my request. He only bowed as he passed me standing by the door, and I fancied there was more anger and disappointment pictured in his face than sorrow.

I heard the hall-door slam, and it was over.

Even at that moment I knew that Lord Eustace was a man who would never forgive a woman for having wounded his vanity, and that all my tears and entreaties, did I condescend to them, would no more move him now than if he had been a stone.

The first feeling I had was a sense of relief. He had come and gone, had spoken and received his answer: the question would never again be renewed between us.

The operation was over, and the limb was severed; the loss would not be realized till strength returned.

My next thought was to remove all traces of my emotion, and try and look as gay as possible to welcome my child back from the convent. I succeeded so well that she noticed the difference at once.

"Dear mothie! How sweet you look! What have you been doing in my absence? Receiving a proposal, you wicked old woman?"

She wound her arm round my waist, and kissed me fondly. How little she thought that she had hit upon the truth! But I caught her spirit, and my answer was as light as her suggestion.

"Several, my darling! You don't suppose *that only one would* have had so good *an effect on me? But I really* am feeling very jolly, May, and just ready for some fun. What shall we do, my pet? Go for a nice drive to the Bois, dine at Severin's, and get tickets for the opera in the evening? They've 'Robert le Diable' on the bills now, and I know you want to see that again."

"Oh, charming! What a day we will have!" cried May, excitedly. "What a dear mothie you are! It will seem like old times to be going about tucked under your arm. I always enjoy the play so much more when you and I are *quite alone* together."

My reward seemed to have come already as I watched her pleasure through the succeeding hours of the day. I felt that no new happiness could have made amends to me for the loss of one loving glance from the eyes of my own child.

In the excitement of victory I had even false strength enough to be able to mention Lord Eustace's visit to her, and its probable results.

"By-the-way, dear," I said, as carelessly as I could, as we sat opposite each other at the restaurant-dinner, "Lord Eustace called this morning while you were at the convent."

In a moment I saw the shade that seemed to gather like a veil over her bright, speaking countenance.

"He has come back from Paris, then?" she said.

"Yes!" I went on quickly, "and looked in *en passant* to say good-by. I am sorry you were not there."

"Why—good-by?"

"Because he is going to leave Brussels, for good and all, I believe. He seems tired of the place, as indeed what man would not be? My wonder is he has staid here so long. There is positively nothing to do."

"And he is going back to Ireland—for good?" said May, wonderingly.

"To Ireland—or somewhere. Any way, he's done with this old place. I told him it was the best thing he could possibly do. For a man in his position to live in a town like this is simply a waste of life."

"So you told him the best thing he could do was to go away?" said May, with a little chuckle that betrayed her satisfaction.

"Certainly I did! I hope I didn't tell

too much upon myself, Miss May! But, unless you have been playing a very double game all along, Lord Eustace's departure is not likely to affect you much."

"I should think not," she answered, laughing, "though he is harmless enough, poor man! And so he's gone for good and all. I wonder he didn't think of making me a present before he went — or you, mothie."

"Well, to tell you the truth, my darling, he did bring a very handsome set of jewelry from Paris, which he wished me to accept—in return for any little attention we may have been able to show him, I suppose—but I declined to take them. I don't care for ornaments, you know, neither do I care for accepting presents from a person who is nothing but a friend."

"What were they like?" demanded my girl, with feminine curiosity.

"Very pretty—something in blue and gold. But there, again, you know I never wear colors, and never shall until I meet your father in heaven."

"You darling mothie!" said May, as she slipped her hand affectionately into mine.

"I don't think he quite liked my refusing them, May; but I managed to do so without offending his lordship, and we parted very amicably. I dare say we may meet again some day in Dublin. Meanwhile, it is rather a relief to get rid of him—isn't it? 'Toujours perdrix'—you know the old proverb, my dear—is apt to pall."

My child did not answer me in so many words, but she laughed quietly to herself, and a beautiful soft light stole over her features which seemed to say how perfectly content she had become. I saw it, and thanked God.

We had a merry evening at the play together: May's hilarity almost, at times, outrunning bounds, and mine trying to keep pace with it; but though my laugh was forced, and I knew that a dark Nemesis would overtake me for the tax I was laying on my feelings, I could still listen to my child's mirth and watch her sunny countenance, and say sincerely that I would not have undone it if I could. Then came home and darkness, and silence and reflection.

Oh! it was terribly hard, when the first flush of excitement was over, to remember how much I had put away from me, and the manner in which I had put it away; to remember how much I could have loved him, and how lonely my future might become!

"I have never had any one to lean on all my life!" I cried to myself in the darkness. "Hugh's death made me old before I was young. I have dragged on any way, without one real tie except this little child dependent on me. This is the first time in my life that I have felt what love is, as a woman feels it—and I have been obliged to crush and put it away. Worse than all, I have been obliged to let him think me other than I am—cold, heartless, fickle—when my heart was bursting with love for him all the while. Oh!" I sobbed to myself, with my face buried in the pillow, lest May should hear the traitorous sound, and wake, "if I might but have laid my head down on his breast and felt I was at rest forever!" I went on with this kind of thing all through the night. Every woman can imagine it for herself, whether she has passed through the same ordeal or not. There is no limit when the flood-gates of our griefs are once laid open. By morning, the excess of my emotion had made me look quite ill, and May reproached herself most needlessly, dear innocent child! for having permitted me to be over-fatigued the day before.

"Selfish beast that I am," she exclaimed, in her impetuous style, "not to have seen that my dear darling was tired! Mothie, why didn't you stop me? Why didn't you say that you felt ill?"

"Because I didn't feel ill, dearest! I don't feel ill now. I shall be all right after a cup of coffee."

"Your face is as yellow as a guinea, and your eyes look like dead mackerel," said May, with that charming candor our sex use toward each other. "Shall I send for Dr. Hermann?"

"Certainly not, pet! I will go for a nice walk, as soon as you have taken your departure, and that will be sure to set me up again."

But I did not go for a walk. I was too much afraid Lord Eustace might not yet

have left Brussels to run the risk of encountering him. I crept into S. Gudule's instead, and the beautiful, solemn service soothed my lacerated feelings and lent me supernatural strength to go on with my self-imposed duty.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I SEE HUGH AGAIN.

But as the now monotonous days crept one after another, I became conscious that I had laid upon myself a burden too heavy to be borne. It is a terrible thing to suffer mental pain in secret. If we may but legitimately parade our woes (I am speaking now exclusively of women), may call in our bosom friends to cry with us—to hear all the details of what he said, and how he looked, and to discuss the chance of any dawn arising on our cheerless night, we possess an outlet by which grief exhausts itself and permits its bearer an interval of rest. I do not think that under any circumstances I should have been able to derive much comfort from this sort of thing, but I know many of my sex who do, and the occasion never arose for me. When my Hugh died I had not a friend to turn to, and I locked my pain up in my own bosom and let it feed upon my heart. Perhaps this first sad experience exercised some influence over my subsequent feelings, but it is true that I had schooled myself to bear such minor trials as fell to my lot in silence, and now that I had received another severe shock, I had but one fear, that the world should guess that I was suffering. So I went about my usual avocations, with the dull pain of disappointment gnawing constantly at my heart and becoming more difficult to bear each day, until I dreaded lest, in spite of all my resolutions, I should betray myself.

"If I were not so utterly alone," I used to say despairingly—"if I had but a father, a mother, a sister—any one to whom I could go and confess my weakness, and weep my heart out on their *bosom*, and feel that they *sympathized with every sob I drew!*"

Of course Juliet, who had always behaved like a sister to me, would have heard my story and bestowed due pity on me, and perhaps commended the resolution I had taken for the sake of her brother's child. But I shrank from reposing this confidence in Juliet. I felt as if I could not go and tell Hugh's sister that my heart had been unfaithful to its first love, and that my life was so overclouded by this second disappointment that I had even lost comfort in the hope which had so long sustained me—of meeting my husband again in heaven. I knew that Juliet would kiss me, and stroke my hair, and call me "poor dear child!" but I felt that she would be thinking all the time of the many vows I had made never to let Hugh's memory be supplanted, and how soon I had forgotten him and them.

And if I could not tell Mrs. Delancey, far less could I have spoken to Lady Power, or either of his other sisters.

"I would rather trust myself to Hugh's judgment than to theirs," I thought. "My poor Hugh! my dear bright boy! If he sees me, I am sure he must pity me—he must understand all I feel—he must know that it is only because he seems so far, far away, so utterly out of reach, that I allowed my thoughts to dwell, even for a moment, on the attractions of another man. Oh, if I could but speak to Hugh! If God would but let his angels appear to us in person, how lightly all the troubles of this life would press upon our earth-laden shoulders!"

As I gave vent to this speech a great longing seemed to rise in me to go to Paris and visit my husband's grave. I had never seen it since the day they laid him there. I had had a nervous dread of upsetting my hard-earned equanimity, and opening the old wounds by doing so. But now I was suffering so keenly, what mattered a little extra pain to me? Besides, I had a fancy that the visit would comfort me—that Hugh would hear and understand me better then, and that he would forgive my lapse of faith to him, and lift the burden of guilt that seemed to oppress me off my shoulders, and I should return home free and happy.

When once this desire had got hold of me, it grew rapidly, until I was feverishly anx

ious to put it into execution. There was no difficulty in settling the matter with May. It was quite enough to tell her that I had conceived a great wish to visit her father's grave again, to make her readily consent to staying at the convent, under the safe wing of Mère Anastase, until my return to Brussels. Once she proposed to accompany me; but I felt I must go alone; and a couple more days found me landed in the city where my brief married life was passed. I found my way to the hotel where we had lived—I was even fortunate enough to secure the room where Hugh had died, for my own use.

I entered it hurriedly, fatigued and travel-stained, hardly remembering its characteristics, and little realizing the shock the sight of them would give me. Sixteen years and more had elapsed since the day I last placed my foot there, but as the door closed behind me, and I looked round at the position of everything in the room, the past came back so vividly, I could have thought that it had occurred but yesterday. There stood the bed, with its dark-green hangings, which my poor Hugh had ridiculed and called a hearse on the first night we had occupied it together, little thinking his bonny limbs would be laid out stark and cold upon it before the month was over. There was the uncomfortable sofa on which I had slept during his illness—the little table that had stood by his bedside—I fancied that even the white coverlet and pillow-cases looked the same as they had done at that eventful period.

I stood for a moment transfixed with astonishment, that I should feel so much the same as I had felt, and that time should have had so little power to destroy old memories in me. Then with a cry I sprang at the bed, and buried my weeping face in its pillows.

Ah! this was the *reality* of life! This was the strong, strong cord by which each act of my existence had been regulated—this was the real sorrow that subsequent happiness could only have helped to lessen, but not exterminate.

I was not weak enough, in that first taste *of renewed bitterness*, to believe that my *love for Lord Eustace* Annerley had been all a sham, but I proved the strength of my girlish attachment by the power it still held over me, and felt that could *it* have been restored, the other would have melted into nothing beside it.

"Hugh! Hugh!" I cried, as I kissed the pillow which I had already wetted with my tears (it is not at all likely it was the same pillow on which my darling's head had rested, but nothing would have convinced me of that fact then), "do you hear me from heaven? Do you see your poor Katie, bowed down with worry and trouble for the loss of you? O my boy! I did not mean to be unfaithful to you! I *do* love you—very, very dearly—if you could come back from heaven to me, I should go mad with joy—but it is so lonely without you, Hugh, and little things worry me so, and I have no one to help bear them with me. But it is all over, darling! It will never be again; for the baby's sake, Hugh—for the sake of the dear baby you left behind you to save my heart from breaking."

To my surprise, at finding how much the sight of this room affected me, my thoughts had flown back to the actual time of my bereavement—Lord Eustace Annerley, my tall daughter, May, my thirty years, seemed all to have passed away like a dream, and I was once more alone with my dead darling—living over the first great pang of losing him.

The affairs of this life called me from my trance. The *garçon* was knocking at the bedroom-door to receive my orders for the day—the *fille de chambre* was waiting with warm water; I must rouse myself and lay aside my traveling-dress, and decide on what I intended to do. It was a good thing for me that it was so. Still, though I dined at the *table-d'hôte* like the rest of the company, my thoughts were all in the bedroom where Hugh had died, and as soon as I could escape I went up-stairs again and spent the evening there. Strange to say, though I tried hard to picture my husband to myself as I had seen him last (and as he had haunted me for months after his death), with his handsome features, drawn and sharpened by the cruel fever that destroyed him, looking as if they had been carved in marble, and his

dear white hands crossed upon the Blessed Symbol of our redemption that lay upon his breast, I could not do it. In that room where he had drawn his last breath—where he had lain, decked for the grave, in his coffin—where I had seen all these things pass, as it were, in a dream, because of my great misery—I could only bring my darling to my memory, buoyant with youth and happiness, with a smile on his face and a merry jest upon his tongue, and a cigar between his lips. I could only recall the brown velveteen coat and the slouched wide-awake hat in which he used to look so handsome. I could only hear the ring of his boyish laugh—the impulsive footstep with which he ran to meet me, and feel the clasp of the strong young arms that used sometimes to handle my childish frame almost too roughly for the preservation of my temper. These memories seemed sadder to me than the others, and I tried to put them away, in vain. My gallant Hugh lived and breathed for me in that silent chamber during the watches of the succeeding night, until I half expected to hear the rush of his impetuous feet coming up the stairs, to see the door burst open, and my young husband stand before me as in days of yore.

"Oh, this will never do!" I said to myself, as I turned restlessly about from side to side; "I shall go mad if I stop in this place. How I wish the morning were come, and I might go to his grave! When I have seen that again, I shall be able to realize for myself that he is really dead."

I was up with the earliest dawn, and as soon as the world was astir I set off on my pilgrimage to Père-la-Chaise. I passed through the long line of shops that deal in mementos of the dead, and lead immediately to the cemetery, with indifference. To my taste the colored pictures, innumerable wreaths, and strings of colored beads that decorate the tombs in Père-la-Chaise, and elsewhere, are a mockery to religion. If we must place tributes of affection on the graves of our dead, let them be formed of the flowers that God makes equally with ourselves, among which are the unfading immortelles—not of trumpery glass beads and tawdry pictures, which may be ranked among the lowest works of art. I would not be hard upon those faithful, sorrowing hearts that spend perhaps all their little savings on such offerings as these, that the world may see that, being dead, their friends yet speak to them; but if they would only think of what their friends now are—that from having left this lower world, where, perhaps, while even in the flesh, they would not have valued such trumpery, they have become spirits—the very essence of nature, severing all connection with the works of men—they would pause before they hung the resting-place of their cast-off bodies with something even lower than themselves.

There are no such suitable offerings to the dead as natural flowers. I thought this as I bought numerous bunches of roses, and lilies, and Parma violets, to scatter over the grave of my Hugh; and when these are not procurable, the symbol of our faith, a word of comfort, or an appeal for mercy, may well take their place—but not strings of blue and white beads such as children thread into necklaces and bracelets.

I wended my way sorrowfully through walls of tombs covered with such tawdry manufactures; even among the highest class of sepulture I saw very few traces of good taste or feeling. I felt cramped and closed in by the hundreds of mortuary chapels and graves I passed, set thickly together like sheep in a pen, until I longed that I could take up my darling's coffin and carry it far away to some green, sheltered country churchyard where he might lie in comfort and have space to breathe.

I had great difficulty in finding his grave. At last an old sexton pointed out to me a marble monument which Sir Thomas Power had caused to be erected to his son's memory, and which I had never yet seen, and told me the young Englishman, Monsieur Power, lay under it. I slipped a fee into his hand, and waited till he was out of sight before I could muster up courage to approach the spot. Yes, it was my darling's grave, there was no doubt of that. On a broken marble shaft, with the sculptured ivy torn from it and lying at its base, were these words:

"To the loving memory of Hugh George, only son of Sir Thomas Power, of Gentism

Cross, in the county of Dublin. He died at Paris, fortified by the rites of the Church, on the 15th day of July, 18—, in the twenty-second year of his age, leaving a young widow to lament his loss."

And then followed those humble appeals to the mercy of a loving Saviour that are usually to be met with on Catholic tombstones, and which are more touching and appropriate than any number of texts setting forth the virtues of the deceased or the sorrow of the survivors. Though I had been told, in a cursory way, of the erection of this monument, it had never been described to me, and it took me completely by surprise. I liked it so much, though it seemed to bring my father-in-law more vividly before me than my husband. I thought of all the old man's kindness to me, and realized how much more he must have felt for me than he professed to do. That trailing ivy, torn away from the shaft it clung to! That was me—poor me! torn from my darling's arms so soon! Then the inscription, "To the loving memory." Ah! the memory must have been loving, for an only son—such a son too! They must have suffered, in losing him, almost as much as I did. "Leaving a young widow to lament his loss." What a young widow I had been! only fifteen—and how I had lamented it! And, though sixteen years had passed away, I was a young widow still, and—

The next thought which flashed through my mind brought me to my knees in a moment.

"Hugh, dearest!" I exclaimed, as I sank upon his grave and pressed my lips upon the marble column, "I am not faithless—I do lament you still—you only, and forever! If you were alive," I sobbed—"if you were only alive, you would understand and believe me when I say so!"

I strewed my roses and lilies loosely over the slab which covered his remains, watering them freely with my tears.

"Oh! if I could, but see you again, my darling!" I moaned. "If I could but tear up all this earth and stone that lies between *us, and lay my* head upon your breast once *more as I did on that mis*erable day when *they dragged you away* from me to lay you here! O my Hugh! I *have* loved you—do believe it—and I have loved your child too. I called her May, because you told me to love the May for your sake; and now that I know why it was so dear to you, I have a twofold reason for loving it. And I belong to the faith, Hugh, you wished so much I should belong to; and we shall meet again in heaven. Oh, say that you pray for me, and that we shall meet again in heaven!"

I exhausted myself with my emotion. Every few minutes I had to stop and rest my head against the broken shaft.

"I fancied I loved him, darling!" I went on, in a whisper, alluding to Lord Eustace; "but I dare say it is only fancy, and the feeling will soon die out. And if it doesn't, I give it up, Hugh—I give it up freely for May's sake and yours, and my affection shall never wander from you again—never, never more! But, oh, my boy!" I continued, recurring to the old want, "if I *could* but see you again—my Hugh—my Hugh!"

That night I had a lovely vision, sent, I fully believe, direct from heaven to comfort me. Worn out by crying over the memories that Paris had evoked, I reached the hotel again, at an early hour in the afternoon, feeling very humble and subdued, and in no disposition to join the party of strangers at the *table-d'hôte*. So I ordered some slight refreshment to be served in my own room, and as soon as I conveniently could I went to bed. For a long, long time I lay awake pondering over the past, and making resolutions for the future, and when I feel asleep I know not. It seemed to me, in my dreams, as if I had never fallen asleep at all, for I was lying in the same bed, under precisely similar circumstances, wondering if I was destined to stay awake all night, when I heard a slight noise as if some one were trying to turn the handle of the dressing-room door which opened from the room I lay in. I called out rather fretfully, in French, "No one can enter!" but still the sound continued, as though proceeding from a very weak or uncertain hand, and, by the light of my night lamp, I presently watched the handle turn, and the door pushed gently open. I was about to spring up, in my anger and alarm, when I was stopped by an

appearance which took my breath away—the appearance of my dead husband, or, at least, the husband whom (as it seemed to me in my dream) I had, until then, supposed to be dead.

"Hugh!" I exclaimed, joyfully, "it isn't true, then!—you *are* alive!"

I thought that he did not answer me, but continued slowly to advance, with his tender eyes fixed upon my face. I had leisure then to observe that he was older, more intellectual-looking, and infinitely handsomer than he had been while on earth; that his waving hair and beard had a sheeny light upon them; that his beautiful gray eyes beamed like fire, and that he moved—I cannot tell you how—but without walking. I knew then he was a spirit, yet I felt no fear. On the contrary, I held out my arm toward him.

"Oh, speak to me!" I said. "I know you have come because I called you. Take me in your arms, Hugh, once more, and speak to me!"

Still he continued to advance until he had reached my side, and then I seemed to be drawn toward him, and to melt into his being till we were one. I saw him no longer, but I felt my head was laid against his breast, and that a gentle warmth was diffusing itself all round my wounded heart in consequence. Then in the darkness, with my eyes hid, I heard his voice:

"Katie! there is no death. I live thrice over in the light of God. Be comforted, dear heart! I am the angel appointed to watch over you. I carry your prayers up to the throne of heaven. Your sacrifice has been accepted there, and the reward will come!"

"O Hugh!" I sobbed, "I love you—I love you!"

His sweet voice fell like music on the silence which succeeded my impetuous speech.

"I know you love me. Love cannot die! Remember my last words to you: 'Here or there, always *one!*' One on earth—one in heaven—one forever and forever! Blessed be His holy name!"

"And I forgot it!" I exclaimed. "I would have put another in your place. O Hugh, forgive me!"

I felt his hand pressed firmly, lovingly upon my head.

"There is nothing to forgive. You *could* not put any one in my place. The chamber is locked—I only hold the key. But you have been mercifully saved from more sorrow; and it will fall instead on a head that is very dear to you. Be watchful, be prayerful, be patient, Katie. The need is coming."

"Oh, tell me how! You frighten me!"

"I may not tell you how. But God is above us all, and I watch over you. Be content."

"Are you often with me, Hugh?"

"Very often. When in your morning prayers you invoke your guardian angel to protect you, you invoke me. When at night you kneel to kiss the ground at his feet, you kneel to me. Do not forget it, Katie."

"I am so glad—so thankful! If I had but known it before, I should never have acted as I have done. But I thought you were so far away, my Hugh! I thought you could neither see nor hear me—and I was so lonely. Oh! why cannot you stay near me, as you are staying now, forever? Why did God blight all my life by taking you away so soon?"

"Raise up your head and look at me."

In my dream I thought I did as he desired me, and hid my eyes again immediately. The brightness of his countenance was so dazzling, I could not bear to encounter it.

"When I married you, Katie, I was so young that neither my good nor evil passions were properly developed, and the evil greatly predominated. Had I been left longer in this world, I should have ruined not only my own life, but yours. It was necessary for the salvation of both of us that I should be removed. So the Lord mercifully took me before I had sunk into actual sin; and having purged away the grossness of my mortal nature, He appointed me to the thrice blessed task of guarding your soul from the dangers mine had escaped. And when we meet again, you will acknowledge His exceeding love and justice."

"We *shall* meet again, Hughie? Say we shall meet again!"

"My darling," he replied—and his voice became, for the first time, so sweetly human that it thrilled right through me—"*we shall meet again!* Never doubt it—never forget it. It is as sure as that God reigns in heaven. The fiat has gone forth and it cannot be altered: Hugh and Katharine meet again!"

"Thank God!" I cried. "Oh! thank Him with me, Hugh. Everything is easy now. The sting of my life is gone."

"My life — your life," he answered, "apart, yet so marvelously blended, are a continual thanksgiving to Him. The fact of our existence blesses Him. The certainty of our redemption glorifies Him. 'Here, or there—always one—*one!*'"

I felt the arms loosening their hold of me. I knew that he was going.

"Hugh, darling! Kiss me before you go!"

I looked up in his dear face, familiar still, though glorified, and found that I was able to bear it. The intense white, burning light that had surrounded him before, had given place to a coronal of mild rays, like placid moonbeams, that made him look, if possible, still more angelic. A tender, happy smile played upon his lips, and his hands were extended over my head in the act of blessing.

"Kiss me—kiss me!" I urged, passionately, in my unchastened, earthly desire.

He did not answer, but he pointed upward with one hand, as his figure was borne slowly and majestically away from my side, and melted into the surrounding darkness. It was as though, while he smiled at my childish request, he would have said, "Not here, love, but there! We shall meet and kiss again."

. . . . . .

What became of me, in my dream, after Hugh's departure, I cannot tell. All I know for certainty is, that I started suddenly into life upon the following morning, conscious that I had been unconscious, but quite unable to say for how long or when. The vision I had had was so vividly impressed upon *my mind that it appeared just as though it had actually occurred, nor to this moment is any detail less perfect than it was at first.* I often ask myself, "Was it a dream?" and my spirit answers, "No." I firmly believe my angel Hugh was sent by God to comfort me that night. I will not disbelieve it until he denies it to me with his own dear lips in heaven.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON WHOSE HEAD?

THERE was nothing left then to detain me longer in Paris. I had intended making another pilgrimage to Hugh's grave, but after my dream the idea appeared almost as monstrous to me as it would have done had I cast his warm, breathing body from my arms in order to fall to kissing the wardrobe that contained his cast-off clothes.

No! I realized now that my Hugh had no longer any connection with Père-la-Chaise—that if he ever visited that spot it would be to guard my mourning heart on its sad journeys thither. But the hope with which I had flown to Paris was accomplished, the mission of my pilgrimage fulfilled. God had granted me my heart's desire. I had spoken with Hugh. I knew that he still lived, still loved me, still sympathized with me, and I wanted no other revelation until we should stand once more face to face. The vision that I had seen was so burned in upon my memory that I felt almost as excited as if my lost husband had been bodily restored to me; and was ready to declare that, for the future, the troubles of this life would be as nothing, since I had been assured that, though unseen, my dear companion walked by my side through them all.

As the train carried me back to Brussels I pondered much upon the details of my dream. There was only one part of it that required explanation to me. Hugh had said, "You have been mercifully saved from more sorrow; and it will fall instead on a head that is very dear to you!"

On whose head could he mean? I understood the first part of the sentence. I had been saved from more suffering by the early

fice which I had made. That might very likely be true. I had for a long time been living (as far as men were concerned) a lonely and loveless life. It was probable that had I married Lord Eustace Annerley, I should have become too much engrossed in my new affection. I should have required too much attention and love in return from him, and I should have been disappointed if I had not received it. But on whose head could this suffering, which I had been spared, fall, except upon his own—I mean upon that of Lord Eustace? Could Hugh have intended me to understand that I had been spiritually guided to resist my lover's persuasions in order that the disappointment I thus escaped might fall upon him, and, under the Divine blessing, lead him to think more of those duties which he now but too palpably neglected? It was the only solution I could suggest of Hugh's mysterious warning; and if it were true, as I could not but believe, what a wonderful proof it was of the means by which God works out His own designs! I thought then, and I have often thought since, that when at the Last Day the meaning of all the apparently inexplicable things that occur in this world is made clear to us, we shall find that our bereavements, our wasted lives, our cruel diseases, are but so many pieces of a puzzle which must be hewn in a certain way before they can fit into one another and make a perfect whole. Still I was not quite satisfied to abide by my own explanation of the sentence that had mystified me, and the next night, when I lay at a town half-way between Paris and Brussels, I watched and waited, and longed and prayed, that Hugh might be permitted to return and make his own meaning clear. I was feverishly anxious to see his face, to hear his voice, to feel the pressure of his arms again. The natural desire to have ocular proof that I had not been deceived by my senses was raging strong within me, but it was not granted. No second vision came to glorify my sight, nor, from that hour to this, have I ever seen Hugh—even in my dreams—again. This fact only confirms my belief that *what I saw on that* occasion was no *hallucination, but the actual* presence of my husband. God sent him, when everything seemed lost, to keep me from despair; to assure me I had still a lover, still a husband, who had but "gone before" to wait in heaven for me.

And I have never parted with that conviction since. I reached Brussels in the early evening, tired but content. My darling girl flew down into the vestibule to greet me.

For the first time it struck me how tall she had grown; what a perfect woman she appeared. During my short absence from her I had been living so much in the past, that it seemed quite like a surprise to me to remember how many years had elapsed since Hugh had left me—Hugh, who had stood by my bedside but the night before last, radiant with youth and happiness.

"What a great big thing you are growing!" I exclaimed, as I took my own child in my arms, and embraced her fondly. The sight of her seemed to bring me right down from heaven to earth again. It—shall I confess my weakness?—recalled so vividly the present trouble, that I felt the peace I had begun secretly to boast of melt away like snow-wreaths in the sun, until the slow, leaden throbbing of my sad heart became once more palpable.

"Well, and what should I be but a big thing, mothie?" cried May, joyously. "Have you forgotten that I shall be sixteen years old next March? or do you want to make yourself out still a young thing of twenty-two? Oh, I am so glad to have you home again, mothie darling! The four days have seemed like four weeks to me. And the Verneys came to see me at the convent yesterday. And the men are going to give a bachelors' ball next month. And Julia is going, and Mrs. Verney thinks I am quite old enough to go. May I go, mothie? Will you take me? Say yes, there's a dear, sweet old thing."

She was coaxing and kissing me all the way as we walked up the stairs together to our rooms.

The idea was so new to me, I would not take upon myself to answer her without consideration.

And it seemed so incongruous

Hugh's grave and Hugh's spirit on the one hand, and May and myself at a bachelors' ball on the other. But I tried to make allowance for my young daughter's natural excitement at the proposal.

"You must give me a little time to reflect and consider, my darling," I replied. "O May, I have been seeing and thinking of such awfully solemn things while I have been in Paris, I cannot turn my thoughts to balls just yet."

She was sobered in a moment. I only mention this to prove how perfectly our minds were in accord.

"Dearest mother! how thoughtless of me! I might have guessed it if I hadn't been a fool! How did you find Hugh's grave? Was it nice and tidy? Has the man taken proper care of it? And do you like the monument! Tell me all about it, mother!"

I did not answer her at first. I had walked up to the familiar portrait of my husband, *insouciant* and smiling with his cigar in his hand, which always occupied a conspicuous position on the walls of our sitting-room. It had always appeared such an excellent portrait to me till then, and indeed to every one who had known him; now, somehow it looked coarse and gaudy, and as if there were no soul in the expression of the boyish face.

"It is not a bit like him," I remarked reflectively.

"Not like him!" echoed May in a tone of disappointment. "Not like Hugh! Why, mothie, I always thought you considered it such an excellent likeness. Such a dear face as it is, too; so jolly and merry! If that's not like Hugh, how am I ever to know what he's like!"

"Oh! he is so much more intellectual and refined-looking," I answered, hardly knowing what I said. "So much handsomer—grander—more majestic! How I wish you could have seen him, May!"

"Mothie! have you seen him?" exclaimed my child in a voice of awe.

Her tone recalled me to my senses. I *had determined never to* tell any one—not *even May—of that bright*, happy vision. I *meant to keep it as a sweet*, solemn secret between my guardian angel and myself. So I answered somewhat evasively:

"Only in a dream, love! a beautiful, blessed dream! It was natural I should dream of him, for I slept in the very bed he died upon."

And then I entered into such details as I knew would interest her, concerning my stay in Paris.

"But about the bachelors' ball, mother," suggested May, when the evening had somewhat advanced, and she began to think sufficient time had been devoted to her father's memory. She was a dear, loving, dutiful child, but she could only regret his loss for my sake, not her own, and there are limits to sympathy, however well placed.

"I shall be sorry to disappoint you, May, but I think you are much too young to go," I said decisively.

"Mother dear, you want to keep me a baby forever! I am older by several months than Julia Verney, and twice as much a woman in appearance; Mrs Verney thought I was eighteen. And it isn't a public ball, you know, only private invitations, and there are so few English girls in Brussels."

"You seem to have conceived a very sudden desire to appear in the world, my May!"

"Well, I suppose it's only natural at my age, mothie. Girls can't be kept at school forever, you know, and of course I should like to go to parties, and dance, like others do."

I sighed deeply, and commenced to ruminate. There was no doubt about it. My child was shooting up into a woman. I think this must always be a trying period to the parent by whose side his child's life has been wholly spent. To find that the pleasant time when your son or daughter looked up to you as to their universal good is over; that instead of the young spirit that depended trustfully on yours for help in all its difficulties, and comfort in all its sorrows, you have a man or woman with diverse opinions, diverse pursuits, and diverse thoughts; an individual, in fact, who, however much he may still love and venerate you, dares to measure your right of action

by his own—is to have all perhaps you wish for—but it is to lose your *child!* One could not desire one's own creation *not* to become individualized—it would be a sorry sort of affection that would keep its object dependent through existence; but there must be a certain wrench when it casts off that dependency; the same sort of unseen effort with which we pass from youth to age, or discover that the pleasures of life have lost their zest for us. And I felt this perhaps in a stronger degree because May was my only child, and had been my only companion for so long. Yet I was proud of her progress even while I sighed over it.

"I can't wear your dresses even now, mothie!" she went on, presently. "You know the skirts are up to my ankles. I was measured at the convent yesterday, and I am just five foot five. That's an inch taller than you are."

"My darling child! I know you are big enough for anything. But about this ball, what will Lady Power say? You know how very particular she has always been in insisting on the necessity of your being presented at least at the viceregal court before you appear anywhere in public."

"Why need she know?"

"Well, in the first place, it would be very difficult to keep it from her without stooping to prevarication; and in the second, dear May, I have never spoken much to you about your prospects in life, because it was not necessary for your happiness, but it is just as well you should know now that you could not, on account of your future position, make your *début* in society without people talking about it."

"Talking about *me!*" said May, with open eyes.

"Yes! about you, and the money you are likely to inherit, and so on. This is a very mercenary world, my child, and the sooner you learn that the better. You might be the most amiable and the most virtuous girl that was ever born, but so long as you were poor the majority of your fellow-creatures would not take the trouble even to inquire whether you were married or single. But the possession, or the probable possession, of money brings a thousand temptations in its train. I am very sorry you are an heiress, May! I much fear it will never contribute either to your happiness or your respectability!"

"O mothie! what a croaking prophecy! Am I such a *very* big heiress, then?"

"You will have more money, a great deal, than you require, May, and others will envy you the possession, and want to share it with you."

"I never mean to share it with any one but you, darling."

I smiled and kissed her. Did she remember those words, I wonder, a twelvemonth afterward?

"That is like you, my own child, in everything—in the generosity of the speech, and its thoughtlessness. But it would be as foolish for me to entertain such an idea as it would be selfish to permit it. Wealth, like all God's gifts, is a blessing when properly bestowed; but a woman is very unlikely to be able to bestow it properly without the help of a man. You will marry some day, my darling, and marry, I most fervently pray, happily; but I trust that it may be a long, long time before that comes to pass."

"Of course it will," said my girl; but she did not deny the probability, and I saw her dear cheeks redden at the idea.

"I can't spare you yet a while, my May!"

"Of course not, mother," she repeated; and then, after a slight pause, she added: "But I should like to know exactly *how much* money I am going to have."

"Why, May?"

Her sudden curiosity startled me; for, as I have said before, I had never mentioned the subject of her fortune to her, except in a cursory way. The expenses of her education had always been liberally disbursed by Lady Power, and for the rest we had had quite as much money as we needed for our moderate way of living. But I had heard from Juliet that the old lady was sparing no expense to set Gentian's Cross in order against the return of her grandchild to Ireland, which had been fixed to take place the ensuing year.

"I think I ought to be told," said May, in answer to my question. "I suppose

money is mine now, although we don't use it."

"No! it will not be yours until you are twenty-one."

"How much shall I have then, mother?"

"Five thousand a year!"

The words dropped lingeringly, reluctantly, from my lips. I had so much wished to keep this knowledge from her.

"*Five thousand a year!*" repeated May, delightedly; "what fun! And how many houses, mothie?"

"How many? Do you think you are to have them by the dozen, darling?"

"No! no! of course not! But isn't Gentian's Cross mine, and the place in Wicklow? Walter Delancey told me so the last time we were in England."

"I believe they will be, May. They will prove a great responsibility to you, I fear. I have often wished they had not been entailed in the female line."

"Oh! don't say that, mothie! because we'll have such a jolly time of it by-and-by. Nothing shall be too good for my old darling when I get my money. She shall have the most lovely dresses, and the most beautiful jewelry, and the finest horses and carriages that were ever seen in the 'ould country' yet."

"Whatever should I do with them, May?" said I, laughing.

"Use them, of course, dear, for the sake of your own little maid."

"Poor little maid! with all her troubles before her, and that luckless money to cap them!"

"The poor little maid doesn't think herself poor, I can assure you. And then—if it ever *is* a bother, which I don't believe, why, I'll get some nice jolly fellow to look after it for us, mother, and take all the trouble off our hands."

"And take you off my hands, too!"

"That I'm sure he sha'n't. No one will ever be clever enough to do that! I shall look out for somebody just like Hugh, mother, who'll love you as much as he does me, or more; and then we'll all live happily to*gether!*"

"*You'll never get another Hugh!*" I *exclaimed, indignantly.*

"Well, then, we'll take the next best fellow we can find," replied my darling, as she sat down upon my lap, and kissed me repeatedly.

I sat there returning her embraces, feeling miserable, I hardly knew why, and wondering between whiles, in a kind of misty, half-stupid manner, on whose head Hugh could have meant me to understand the sorrow I had missed should fall. And as I pondered, I kissed the golden crown of the head of my own child and his, and pressed my face against her hot crimson cheeks, and never once thought of *her*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FIVE THOUSAND A YEAR!

THE next morning I renewed the subject of the ball of my own accord. I was so afraid my darling might be fretting in secret over her disappointment.

"May, dear! I am writing to Lady Power, and I shall ask her opinion as to whether you may go to this dance or not. I dare say she will see no objection, and then we shall feel quite safe."

"No, don't ask her, mothie!"

"Why not, my dear?"

"Because I don't care about it—indeed, I would rather not go."

"You have changed your mind rather suddenly, May," I said, in surprise.

"I don't think I've changed my mind, mother; that is to say, of course I should like the dancing, and the fun, and all that; but I didn't know, you see—you never told me before of the reason there was for my not coming out in a place like Brussels; and I understand plainly, dear, that my *début* should be different from that of other girls—that I ought, in fact, to make my first appearance with a splash and a dash."

She laughed lightly as she finished her sentence, but I saw that she meant it.

"*Five thousand a year!*" she went on; "I could hardly sleep last night for thinking of it. How much does that make a day, mother?"

"O May! try not to look upon it in that light. I should break my heart if you were to become fond of money. You are not to have it, remember, till you come of age, and then I suppose there will be proper people selected to look after the major part of it for you; and the allowance which will be reserved for your own private use you must try to lay out in the manner which will bring you most credit with God, and not with man."

"You mean by helping the poor. Why, of course I shall, mothie! But why are you so serious about it? Money is a very good thing to have!"

"Sometimes, darling."

"Always! when we know how to spend it. And we have never had more than *just enough*. There are dozens of things I know you want, and would like to have, that you can't afford yourself. But you shall have them all when I get my money, dear, see if you don't!"

She came dancing up to me as she spoke, and looked with her bright, sweet, Irish face into mine.

"So I am not to mention the bachelors' ball," I said, with a view to changing the subject, which annoyed me, I hardly knew why. The fact is, I instinctively felt that the peaceful years I had spent in the rearing of my own child were rapidly drawing to a close; and in prospect of our return to Gentian's Cross and the hospitality of Lady Power, I experienced much the same sensations as I had done on the occasion of my first visit there.

"No! but I wish you'd ask grandmamma what she thinks about our going to Italy before we return home."

"To Italy, May! That's a new idea!"

"I've often wished to go there, and so have you, and we may never have another opportunity. And I'm getting just a little bit sick of dear old Brussels; mother, ar'n't you?"

"I'm *very* sick of it," I responded, with energy.

"And it would be so charming to see Rome together! When are we supposed to return to Ireland, mother?"

"Next May," I said with a sigh.

"And this is October. We shouldn't have more than a few months there altogether. And I want some good singing and Italian lessons terribly. Can't we manage it, darling?"

"I have no doubt we can, May. The idea strikes me as pleasantly as it does you. I have wanted a change for some time, and there is no occasion to ask Lady Power's leave. But I will tell her of our intentions by to-day's post."

The prospect charmed me as much as any prospect could charm me just then. I considered the proposal as a happy inspiration on my child's part, and wondered I had not thought of it myself. To quit Brussels at that period was the very best thing that I could do. True, that Lord Eustace Annerley had kept his word and left the town; but I never felt quite sure whether he might not return; and without that fear there were too many sad recollections associated with the various places we had frequented together to render it possible that I should ever take the same pleasure in visiting them again.

May and I experienced little difficulty in carrying out our project. We had no personal property but such as we could easily take with us, and only one maid who was permanently attached to our service, and accompanied us everywhere. So that at the end of a month we found ourselves comfortably settled in Genoa, which we had decided to make our first resting-place.

During the next six months we moved quietly about from city to city, just suiting our own inclinations as to how long we should remain in each; and if I was not happy or entirely at ease, I was, at least, content. It contented me to watch my darling girl enjoying herself—to hear the expressions of admiration which followed her blond beauty wherever it was seen—to take interest in her various studies; and, above all, to mark how completely ignorant she appeared to be that anything had ever happened to disturb the inner peace of my life. We staid at Florence, Rome, Genoa, Naples, and Leghorn; and I had learned, by reason of the blessed vision vouchsafed to me at Paris, to bear my little burden so

manfully that, had it not been for an occasional heart-stab as old remembrances came over me, I should have almost believed that I was cured. But, as far as my physical health was concerned, I was certainly not strong. Up to that period of my life I had been a remarkably healthy woman, never very robust in appearance or reality, but with a good appetite, an unimpaired digestion, and great capability for bearing fatigue. Now, little by little my appetite failed me, my sleep became restless and interrupted, and a very slight exertion would be followed by unusual languor. For some time I attributed the change to the climate of Genoa, but I did not find that the temperature of other places agreed with me better. I laid all the blame then upon Italy, and decided that I should not recover my usual strength until I had quitted it again.

But I was very anxious that my dear child should not have the least suspicion that I was ailing, and seriously cautioned my maid not to breathe a hint that might alarm her. I knew how affectionate and sensitive a disposition she possessed—how easily she would become frightened over a mere trifle, if it concerned me—and I would not run the chance of making her think it necessary to leave Italy one moment earlier than she need for my sake. So I locked this little secret in my own breast (as I had locked the other), and fully believed that it needed but my native air to set me up again.

We returned to England in April, when my daughter had just completed her sixteenth year—I, my thirty-second! Lady Power had made a great point of our being at Gentian's Cross by the beginning of May, as the viceregal drawing-room and ball, at which my child was to be presented and make her *début*, were to be held during the course of the month. How heavy was my heart on the day we turned our feet homeward! A presentiment of evil hung over me for which I could not account. May was blooming and happy; full of love and duty to myself; a daughter any mother might be proud to own; and she was about to be *launched on the world* under the most favorable auspices. Surrounded by affection and luxury—*with Lady Power* and myself as her chaperons—with a bright present, and still brighter future—what could I, under the most extravagant circumstances, have wished more for my child than she was about to receive? It would seem as though the wildest hopes of any parent were about, in her case, to be amply realized. Yet I was unhappy—morbidly, wickedly unhappy, as I told myself. The old feeling of fear with which I had formerly approached the Power family had died out. I was now a woman of mature age, and independent of everybody. I knew that if I disapproved of anything that was said or done with respect to my daughter, I had the right to take her away then and there, and keep her, until she became of age, under my own control. And I had determination enough to carry such a resolution into effect, should it at any time become necessary to do so. But I was not in the least afraid of any such necessity arising. I knew that Lady Power was propriety itself—and generosity itself where May was concerned—and my child would be at all times as safe under her wing as mine. It was not unkindness or inattention I feared for her; it was too much love, too much indulgence.

The old curse of jealousy and desire of complete appropriation was stirring in my breast again, and I felt, in taking May back to Ireland, as though I were once more relinquishing half my claim on her affection, and offering it up as a victim on the altar of the Powers' pride in the possession of their heiress.

This was very weak of me—very foolish. I hope it may have been partly attributable to the fact of my ill-health, that I did not show much more strength of mind at thirty-two than I had done at sixteen. But during the last six months I had clung to my child perhaps more than ever as the sole good thing I had left; and to part with even a thousandth part of her, at the demand of the world, was a sacrifice to me.

May did not share my gloomy prognostications in any way. On the contrary, she was full of life and spirits—sometimes, perhaps, almost too much so. For since the day on which I had thought fit to intrust her with the knowledge of her prospective fortune, I had observed a difference in my

child. Not toward me—never toward me, thank God!—but with regard to the rest of the world.

Her character appeared to change, or rather I should say, perhaps, that it suddenly developed. It has been mentioned before that Hugh, young as he was at the time of his death, had evinced a very impulsive yet determined disposition, and his child inherited these traits from him. And, furthermore, she had taken from me a sharper, quicker temper than her father ever had. She conceived strong likes and dislikes, and took no pains to conceal them—as in the case of Lord Eustace Annerley. I do not believe that, by nature, she was avaricious, but she was fond of power; and the prospect of a large fortune represented power to her.

With the knowledge of what was coming, she betrayed a disposition to haughtiness which pained me. She became dominant and overbearing to her fellows in a manner I could not bear to see. Yet I consoled myself with the idea of how much better, in reality, she was than the majority of her companions.

"She is very clever," I thought, "and she is very young. When she grows older, and sees of how very little value talent is compared with goodness and virtue, she will learn to think more humbly of herself. Life is just opening before her; new ideas, fresh theories, crop up in her mind each day; and in the ignorance of youth she fancies, because they are new to her, they must be so to all the world; and because she has not the experience wherewith to combat them, they who do so wish to quarrel with her. She is too positive at present—too sure of herself in everything—but she has a large heart and a large mind, and they are the safest ballast to take us steadily through life."

So I battled with my own conviction, unwilling to think my darling could be anything short of perfect; doubly so to harbor the idea that the prospect of so paltry an acquisition as wealth could have the power to make her think herself better than her companions.

It was evening when we arrived at Gentian's Cross. We had had a rough and fatiguing passage from Holyhead, and I was fairly worn out. But the family carriage was in waiting for us at the Dublin station, and I had no need to do more than to rest till it landed us at the house itself. Lady Power, her daughters Margaret and Blanche (Nora had married an officer in the army, and gone out to India with him about a year before), and Mrs. Delancey, were assembled in the library to welcome us.

"Good gracious, Katie, how ill you look!" was the greeting with which Juliet received me.

May, who was in her grandmother's arms, turned sharply at the words.

"Ill, Aunt Juliet?" she exclaimed. "Mother's not ill. She's only tired."

"That's all; only tired," I echoed, with an attempt at a smile. I felt as if I were sinking into the ground.

"Juliet is always a bit of a croaker, especially in regard to you, Katharine," said Lady Power, as she condescended to imprint a kiss upon my forehead. "A good night's rest is all you need to set you up again."

"Well, if the difference in your appearance is entirely due to fatigue," said Juliet bluntly, "all I can say is fatigue has an extraordinary effect on you. Why, you are mere skin and bone compared to what you were last year!"

"We felt the heat in Florence very much," I responded quickly. "I think May has lost flesh also."

"Not a bit of it. She is looking perfectly well."

"Frances is looking charming," added her old grandmother, who did not seem as if she could take her eyes off my child. She had not dropped, and never did, the habit of opposing me on the subject of my daughter's name. "And she is the very image of what I was at her age. She will make quite a sensation at the drawing-room on the 24th."

"Or her dress will," remarked Margaret Power, who was the most unpleasant of them all.

"Such a dress!" said Juliet. "It is worth looking at, Frances. Grandmamma sent all the way to Paris for it."

"To Worth's!" exclaimed May.

"Yes, to Worth's."

"Mother, isn't that jolly?" she said, turning to me, with sparkling eyes. The remarks on my appearance did not seem to have had any effect on her. I was so thankful.

"I think your mother will be glad to get to her own room, Frances," said Juliet. "Suppose you go and make yourselves comfortable before dinner, and we will have a formal inspection of your wonderful dress afterward."

I managed to drag through the dinner-hour somehow, and as soon as it was concluded, in pity to my dear May's evident anxiety, we were all ushered with much pomp into a spare room, where, laid out upon the bed, was Worth's last effort on behalf of the Power family.

It looked very simple, but, like all costumes by the same milliner, it was a triumph of good taste and extravagance.

The petticoat and bodice were almost entirely covered with point-lace. The train, of soft creamy white satin, was trimmed with the same costly material, relieved at intervals by bunches of snowy-white feathers. There was not a thread of color anywhere. All was pure, spotless, and bridal-like.

I pictured my child's golden hair contrasting with the shining white drapery, and could not refrain from an expression of admiration. As for May, she was speechless with delight.

"She will wear the family diamonds with it," remarked Lady Power, in a tone of gratified ambition. "Margaret thinks it is not orthodox she should do so until they become hers by law; but it is my wish, and no one has the right to gainsay me."

"Dear grandmamma!" said May, kissing her.

"You are the only hope left to me, my dear Frances, remember," responded the old lady; "and while you are a good and affectionate girl I shall consider nothing that I can do too much for you."

"May is the best daughter that ever lived," I interposed, fondly. "She is not *likely to behave less* well in any other relation *of life.*"

"Ah! my dear, so we thought of her poor father," replied Lady Power, with a significant intonation that told me I was not quite forgiven, even after sixteen years of penance, for the part I had taken in that transaction.

"Have you thought of what dress you are going to wear at the drawing-room yourself, Katie?" said Juliet, with an evident view to changing the conversation.

"No! *I* am not to be presented, I hope!" I replied, with a comical look of dismay.

"Nonsense! you must go with your daughter. I think your absence would be very conspicuous."

"I never dreamed of it. I never imagined it would be necessary. I thought Lady Power was going to present May to Lady ——."

"And no more it is necessary, my dear," said my mother-in-law, sharply—"not in the slightest degree. *I* shall, of course, present my granddaughter to Lady —— under any circumstances; and there is no occasion at all for your troubling yourself in the matter."

"But you would like to see Frances at her first ball," persisted Juliet.

"Can't I go to the ball unless I attend the drawing-room?"

"No; the invitations are only issued for those who have done so. And I think it will be a marked omission if you are not present at your daughter's *début.*"

"Oh, yes, dear mothie, you *must* go to the ball," pleaded May. "I couldn't enjoy it without you. I shouldn't dance a bit, thinking of you at home. And do have a mauve dress, darling—mauve becomes you so beautifully; and send to old Worth for it. There's plenty of time. And you will look so pretty, and so young, and so nice—I know you will."

"She'll be taking off all your partners if you don't take care, May," said Juliet, laughing.

"Mothie, darling, you *will* go—won't you?"

"Why, May, what should I do with a dress from Worth when I had got it? And mauve, too, you silly child! I wonder you don't suggest pink at once. No; if I do go,

it will be in half-mourning, and the court-milliner in Dublin will make me a dress quite good enough for all the use I shall put it to."

"I should go entirely in white, if I were you," said Juliet.

"Perhaps I may, dear. I couldn't wear colors."

"Never mind, so you *do* go," interposed my child.

The conversation did not seem to please Lady Power. She had been fidgeting about from the commencement of it, and now she struck in, tartly:

"It would be quite absurd of Katharine to go in white when her daughter is in white also. People would laugh at her."

"I don't see that at all, mamma," said Juliet, decidedly. "Katie's dress need not be made in the same style as Frances's, nor of the same material; but much older women than herself wear white when it suits them; and it especially suits Katie's chestnut hair."

"There is no need of her appearing at the drawing-room at all," repeated Lady Power, preparing to quit the room; "but, if she *does* go, I hope Katharine's own sense will show her it would be ridiculous to go tricked out like a young girl of sixteen."

I felt too ill to dispute the subject with her, and, whispering to Juliet that I was tired and wished to go to bed, I sought my own room instead of accompanying the party down-stairs. May—dear, darling child—wanted to accompany me as usual; but I persuaded her to remain with her grandmother, and resigned myself to the services of my maid.

I had lain in bed, utterly weary, but very wide awake, for perhaps two hours, before my child came up to bid me good-night. We were not to sleep in the same room, which was a trouble to me, and in the hurry of arrival May had not had time to enter my apartment before. When she did, she looked round it with dissatisfaction.

"What a nasty little room they've given you!" she said.

"Little, darling! Why, it's larger than our old *room at Brussels.*"

"*But it's half the size of* mine, mothie. I think the house-maid must have made a mistake, and shown us to the wrong ones."

"Oh, no; I dare say it's all right," I answered, quietly; and I like a small room, May."

I had no doubt whatever myself upon the subject. As it had been in days gone by, so it was now. The heiress of Gentian's Gross must have a good room, but it little signified how the heiress's mother was served.

"Grandmamma has been showing me the family jewels," said May, as she seated herself on my bed. "How beautiful they are! Have you ever seen them, mothie?"

"Never, darling."

"There are two sets of diamonds; and one has been just reset by Hunt and Roskell for my presentation. They do glitter so! And then there are two sets of pearls, and one of emeralds, and one of rubies and opals—and the rings, mothie, I should think there must be fifty rings if there is one, and they all fit into a large case made expressly for them. And grandmamma has shown me Hugh's portraits. She has three miniatures: one taken when he was a baby, and one when he was three years old, and one when he was twelve. And she has given me the baby one. What a dear little baby he must have been! But of course you've seen them, mothie, often and often?"

"I've never seen them," I cried, in a voice of pain. "She might have shown them to me. They would have been such a comfort years ago, when I was grieving so bitterly for his sake. Where is your miniature, darling? Let me see it—do!"

"I'll run and fetch it, mother. I left it on my toilet-table."

While she was absent my thoughts were very hard. Lady Power was not one whit altered. I should have the same battle to fight over again, and I determined that, cost what it might, I would attend the drawing-room and the ball. She should not wrest my daughter from my arms now, any more than she had been able to do then. But when May returned with the miniature of her dead father, taken at a twelvemonth, the sight of the innocent baby face looking out from its little old-fashioned cap—

so like her own at the same age—softened my rebellious spirit, and I could only remember with gratitude what a blessing she had been to me, and how mercifully she had been preserved.

"It is just what you were at the same age, May," I said, as I examined the miniature. "I wonder Lady Power never showed it to me. She might have known how it would interest me, if only on that account."

"Keep it, dear mothie. I don't care about it," said May carelessly. "I would much rather you had it."

"Oh! no, May. Thank you for the kind thought, but you must not give away your grandmother's presents. Besides this is an heirloom. But I should like to keep it just for to-night, darling. It looks so familiar to me. So like you both"—and I kissed the picture as I spoke.

"I say, mother," said May, in a mysterious voice, "do you know if all the furniture and ornaments come to me with Gentian's Cross?"

"I don't know, dear. I never asked. Why?"

"Because there are several things here I should like to have—indeed, that I think I ought to have. Hugh's portraits, for instance, and the family pictures, and that bust of my grandfather, and the books. I shouldn't care a pin about the furniture—it's so old-fashioned; I expect I shall very soon turn it out-of-doors, if I do get it; but the other things should go with the house by rights."

"I don't know about the 'right' of it, May. Of course everything is properly and legally settled, and in due course you will have your own. But try and not think so much about it, darling. I can't bear that you should be always thinking of it, for fear it should never come to pass."

"It *must* come to pass if I live," said May, as she jumped lightly off the bed. "Good-night, my own sweet mother. Sleep well, and get up quite jolly in the morning."

"I will if I can, my darling," I answered lightly. She had nearly crossed the threshold *of my room when she* turned back again.

"You're not really ill—are you, mother?"

"Certainly not, dear."

"Because Aunt Juliet has been making an awful fuss about you down-stairs. She says you are looking wretched, and that you must have been overdoing it, and all sorts of things."

"Aunt Juliet is always too kind. You know best how I have been."

"But you *do* look rather peaky."

"Well, the best remedy for that disease is rest; so be off to bed, you chatterbox, and leave me to go to sleep."

She ran away with a laugh as I spoke. Sweet, light-hearted laughter! How seldom was I to hear it after that night!

CHAPTER XXVII.

I FALL ILL.

But though May had left me, and everything around me was conducive to repose, I could not sleep. At first it was only a severe pain in my head, and a wearied, *beaten* feeling in my limbs, that prevented my going off; but then succeeded a period of intense wakefulness, during which I tried hard *not* to think, but found it impossible. Visions of the long ago blended themselves with prospects of the future—the faces of Hugh and May, and Lord Eustace, became mingled together. I was now a maid, now a wife, now a widow, now a mother, now nothing at all, but only Katharine Power trying with all her might to banish thought and court forgetfulness instead. I heard the clocks strike one hour after another, and each hour seemed more interminably long than the last, and yet I appeared to be neither asleep nor awake, but lying in a state of drowsy consciousness. Once I found myself standing by the chest of drawers, having apparently left my bed in an aimless manner, and without being aware of the fact.

"Oh! this will never do," I said to myself. "Coming back to the old place has set me rambling. I *will* go to sleep! It only requires a strong effort of will to enable us to do what we choose."

So, having drunk a large draught of

water, I found my way back to bed again, remarking, as I went, how very dry and hot my hands were, and how empty and light my head appeared to be. However, I did go to sleep that time, though very unsatisfactorily, and, when my maid appeared to call me in the morning, I was too ill to rise.

"Don't tell Miss May," I urged, "but I have such a very bad pain in my head, Parker, that I think it would be wiser if I were to lie in bed."

Parker did not tell May, but she went and fetched Mrs. Delancey, who sent immediately to Dublin for the family doctor. And his fiat was that I was going to be ill.

They did not tell me so at first, but the trouble broke gradually upon me, and, indeed, I had suspected it for some time past. May's alarm, when the news was communicated to her, was sufficient to make any mother conceal her symptoms as much as possible.

"Oh, you are going to die! I am sure my mother is going to die," she whimpered. "What shall I do without you? O my God, let me die too!"

"May, darling," I said, as I took her strong, young hand in mine, "you will make me really ill if you give way like this. You have seen so little of sickness, my dear, that you imagine it to be much worse than it is. I fancy I have carried home some of the Genoese malaria with me. It is very unfortunate, but all I have to do is to lie here quietly and take my medicine till I get well again. You won't retard my recovery by making me unhappy, will you, May?"

Her aunts and grandmother joined their persuasions to mine, until, between us, we had quite blinded my darling's eyes to the fact of there being any danger in my illness; and then I was satisfied and content to take whatever Heaven might see fit to send me.

And Heaven was very merciful. There followed a period of much pain and sleeplessness, and a little unconsciousness, during which I was faithfully nursed by my dear child and my sister, Mrs. Delancey; and at the end of a fortnight I was pronounced convalescent, and allowed to leave my bedroom. But the weakness that supervened was so startling that the doctor shook his head discontentedly, and advised my instant removal from Dublin.

"We must send you to some bracing seaside place in England, madam," he remarked on that occasion. "This country is much too enervating for your constitution, and it will take some little time to cure the mischief Genoa did you."

Secretly I was pleased at the idea. I should have my own child to myself again. But it only wanted a fortnight to the time of the drawing-room, and, although I had, of course, given up all idea of attending it myself, I felt I could not take May away before she had been presented.

"I can go to England the beginning of June, doctor, but not before."

"You must go before. It is absolutely necessary. You must go at once."

"I can't go at once. My daughter is to be presented on the 24th, and so many preparations have been made for the occasion, I could not think of upsetting them by taking her away."

"Then you must go without your daughter."

"Without May? O doctor, I couldn't."

"Well, madam, all I can say is, your health depends upon your leaving Dublin at once—to-morrow—to-day, if it were possible. If your daughter's presentation is of more consequence than your life, stay for it; but if not, you must leave her behind or take her with you."

"But, doctor, you perplex me sadly. Can it really be so serious as that?"

"It is so serious, madam, that I am going at once to speak to Lady Power and Mrs. Delancey, and tell them that if they do not see my directions carried out I cannot answer for the consequences."

I almost laughed at the idea, for I only felt weak and disinclined to exert myself; but half an hour afterward Juliet entered my room with a face full of anxious concern, and eager to persuade me to leave at once.

"The doctor says your pulse is terribly low, dear Katie, and that we are not to lose an hour in sending you to the seaside. It's a great worry, of course, and just at this time, too; but it must be done, and

sooner the better. What do you think of Brighton? It is the most bracing air I know of."

"But, Juliet, how can I put off May's presentation? What will Lady Power say? After all her kindness, too."

"But why need it be put off? You could have gone, any way."

"You mean that I am to go away without her?"

"I am sure it will be the best thing to do. You shall not go alone, Katie. I will go with you; and we shall, of course, take Parker."

"And leave May behind with her grandmother?"

"And leave May behind with her grandmother," repeated Mrs. Delancey.

"She will never consent to it," I said decidedly. "May would break her heart if I were to go without her. It is useless to think of it, Juliet. It cannot be."

"Don't you think we could talk May into it, Katie?"

"I am sure you couldn't. Why, she has never been really separated from me in her life; and to part us now, when I am ailing—it would drive my poor child half crazy."

"I think, if the matter is put before her in its proper light, that she may become reconciled to it. You see, it's not like an every-day occurrence, Katie, that has but to be put off till next week. If Frances—I cannot get out of the way of calling her by that name—is not presented this season she must wait till next. And, between you and me, that dress from Worth's cost a hundred pounds, although all the lace belonged to my mother."

"I dare say it did," I answered carelessly. The dress appeared of very little consequence in my eyes. "And of course it is very unfortunate I should have been so stupid as to fall ill at this juncture; but it can't be helped, so what are we to do?"

"But you acknowledge the absolute necessity of your going away, dear?"

"Yes, I suppose so—since the doctor says I must."

"*Well, then, that's* settled, and I shall *start with you to-morrow.* And now with *regard to Frances.* Have I your leave to persuade her to stay at Gentian's Cross, if I can?"

"Oh! certainly," I replied, smiling to myself. "Persuade her by all means, *if you can.*"

But in my secret heart I felt sure her attempt would fail.

Juliet called Parker, and having given her a few directions for the morrow, departed in search of May.

I awaited the issue of her mission with some little anxiety. I was afraid my child would feel the disappointment of putting off the drawing-room ball on which she had been reckoning so long.

In about a quarter of an hour the door of my room opened gently, and May appeared upon the threshold. I saw, by her flushed face and tell-tale eyes, she had been crying. I held out my weak arms to her, and in another moment she was in them.

"Well, my pet," I said, lovingly, "and are you very much disappointed?"

"Terribly, dear mother. Fancy your having to go away! It frightens me awfully, though Aunt Juliet says there is no need."

"Aunt Juliet is right, my darling. There is no need of fear. Change of air is all I require to make me strong again. But I am thinking of you, my own child, and of this drawing-room. It worries me so that I should be the cause of annoyance to you, or Lady Power."

"Don't let it worry you, dear mother. Of course it won't be a bit the same to me, but I'll do the best I can to get through it without you; and as soon as ever it is over I shall come and join you."

I started—just a very little. They *had* persuaded her, then. But I would not have let her see my disappointment for the world, for it was utterly selfish. I was ashamed of the feeling even while it passed through my heart.

"What has Aunt Juliet been saying to you?" I inquired, softly. "Tell me all about it."

"Not much, mother dear. She told me first what the doctor had said—that it was absolutely necessary you should leave Dublin at once; and at first I wanted to go with you, of course."

"Of course! I knew you would!" I echoed, triumphantly, as I squeezed her tightly in my arms.

"But grandmamma and Aunt Juliet told me how much you wished me to remain and be presented; and I suppose, after all the fuss they've made, and the trouble they've been put to about it, it would be a pity to throw it up for the sake of a few days. Still, mother darling, I'm miserable at the thought of your going away without me, and unless Aunt Juliet were going with you, nothing on earth should make me stay behind; and I shall come soon, sha'n't I? You will send for me as soon as ever the drawing-room is over, won't you?" my darling added, as she burst into tears upon my bosom.

I was quite content that she should remain at Gentian's Cross, then, however much I might feel it. I soothed and comforted her with every soft and loving word in my vocabulary, and embraced her over and over again, as I assured her I should count the hours till we were reunited. I succeeded so well, that in a few moments, with the elasticity of youth, she was smiling through her tears, and planning all sorts of projects for our mutual enjoyment at the seaside.

But she shed tears again on more than one occasion before that day was concluded, and so fearful was I of witnessing her emotion when we should actually part, that I quite longed for the moment to be over.

It had been arranged between the doctor and the Powers that Juliet should take me to Hastings; and the next day, at an early hour, I was lifted into the carriage, and we set off upon our way.

I will not detail the parting between my own child and myself. I cannot! It was exquisitely painful then; it is far more painful to remember now.

. . . . . .

We made the long, fatiguing journey by tedious stages, in consideration of my weakness, and Juliet did all she could by kindness and attention to beguile the way.

I was too seriously inconvenienced on the journey, *and too utterly* prostrated by its *effects, to have much* leisure at first for fretting over my separation from May. As soon as I arrived at Hastings they put me into bed, and I did not leave it for several days.

But as soon as I had overcome the primary weakness and exhaustion consequent on my removal, I became painfully conscious of the dull, uncertain feeling of disappointment that was feeding on my heart. Selfish, exacting mother that I was!

How hateful, on a closer inspection, did my eager jealousy appear to myself!

What, then, would I have had my bright young daughter abandon the prospect of gayety just opening before her, to chain herself down to my sick-bed?

Would I have permitted her to relinquish what, in her position as the heiress of Gentian's Cross, was almost a public duty, to gratify a private inclination, which was, after all, not a necessary one?

No, no! Both my heart and my reason repudiated the idea with indignation.

My darling was much better where she was—the light and the sunshine of the old house, as she would be the greatest attraction of the ballroom — than wasting her loveliness in my weak, stupid company, down at an uninteresting seaside place. Juliet and Parker could, and did, do all and more for me than I required; yet I could not help wishing, in a kind of silly, maudlin way, sometimes, that my own child had required *just a little more* persuasion before she yielded to their advice and mine.

Oh, my selfish, greedy heart! would it always go on in this way, longing to have everything in the world for itself—hating to share its possessions with any one—thinking it must be first and foremost wherever its affections were placed?

Yet, my child! my own, own child! what had I in this life to comfort me but her? Was it to be wondered at if I grudged one moment of her company to others?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LETTERS!

As soon as we were fairly settled in Hastings, it may be well believed I took no such interest in anything as I did in the news that reached me by the daily post.

May's letters — and my darling wrote every day — were something like letters, and, being the first I had ever received from her, possessed an unusual attraction for me. Each morning her envelope would contain three to four sheets of closely-written paper, detailing every circumstance of her life, which, with reading over and over again, and answering by slow and sometimes painful stages, were almost sufficient to fill up the measure of my monotonous and weary days. If I had passed a bad night, or waked before the country post was in, I became feverish with anticipation, or fearful that the postman had already passed our door. Once, when, by some accident, my darling missed writing to me, I suffered a relapse from fretting and suspense; and all the time I was counting the hours till the drawing-room should be over, and May free to join me again.

She told me everything that occurred to her. Nothing could have been more minute, at first, than her description of the places she went to, the people she met, and the presents Lady Power lavished upon her. To-day, it was a watch set with brilliants, that had been one of her grandmamma's wedding-presents; to-morrow, a horse, that May might learn the art of riding, for which purpose a master had been engaged to attend every morning at Gentian's Cross; or it was a new dress, or a flounce of old lace—or some ornament, luxury, or attention intended to do honor to the heiress of the Powers.

"Mamma seems to be launching out pretty freely," said Juliet, laughing, one day after I had read her May's letter. "She will altogether turn that little puss's head, if you don't take care. Diamonds for a *child of that age! It's* perfectly absurd! *She never did a quarter so* much for one of *her own daughters.*"

"I have always heard it said that women are fonder of their grandchildren than of their own children, though I cannot understand it," I answered, with a faint smile.

"Mamma appears to be, at all events. I hope she won't spoil May."

"She *cannot* spoil her," I replied, quickly. "You have heard how, in the midst of describing all her new treasures, she harks back to the one idea of joining me here. May would leave them all to-morrow to come to her mother."

"I should hope so!" said Juliet, gravely. "Does she mention the dinner-party at Lady Carrigan's?"

"No! it is strange, but she seems to have forgotten it."

But May had not forgotten it. In her next letter she said: "Were you surprised, dearest mother, that I did not tell you about Lady Carrigan's dinner? The fact is, I never went. Granny thought at the last that she had better not take me to so large a party before I had been introduced. So she and Aunt Margaret went alone, and I was not a bit disappointed. Fancy who took Aunt Margaret down to dinner! You'll never guess! *Lord Eustace Annerley!* Granny says he inquired a great deal about me, and was surprised to hear I was going to be introduced so soon. He is to be at the ball, and I believe Granny invited him to come and see her here; but I hope to goodness he won't, for I'm sure I sha'n't be civil to him. I have always thought he behaved so ungratefully to you, after all your kindness to him, cutting away from Brussels as he did last year, and never coming near or writing to us again, after pretending to be such tremendous friends, too! However, I know you like him, darling mother, so I'll try not to snub the creature, for your sake, but hope we sha'n't see too much of him all the same. By-the-way, I've got a bit of bad news to tell you, darling, and that is, I sha'n't be able to get away as soon after the presentation as I thought I should. I spoke to Granny about it this morning, and she says she must give a few dinner-parties to introduce me to the county people; and then I suppose there will be their stupid visits in return. And all the time I

urning with impatience to get back to wn mammy, and wait on her as I used . But you are getting much stronger, Aunt Juliet says, and we are all so ful for that. It was charming to hear had been out in a bath-chair! How will your own child be walking by the of your chair, I wonder? Very, very, soon, she hopes, unless you have dis- d them altogether before she gets to ngs, which will be better still. There that man has actually called! The nt has just brought in his card to me l Eustace, I mean), with a request from y that I will go down to the drawing- ! And it is just post-time, so I can- wait to tell you what he says to-day, will to-morrow, darling, so good-by ien."

was much stronger; but the reception is letter nearly threw me back again. concluded that Lord Eustace Annerley with his family in Wicklow. I had had eason to think otherwise, but I had supposed he would have tried to gain ntry to Gentian's Cross, particularly he knew that, if I were not at the ent resident there, he had every chance eting me some time or other. At first led him cruel, hard, unfeeling, volun- to place such an obstacle in the way of rgetting him. Then, remembering the mstances under which I had dismissed my heart softened, and I began to ler whether, in trying to renew our ac- tanceship, he had any hope of remov- he impression I had permitted him to , that I myself was heartless, frivolous, leceitful. To a man like Lord Eustace, rsed in all manner of gayety, the attrac- of Gentian's Cross could not be so great mselves as to preclude all suspicion of erior motive in his desire to visit there. ew days I found that my sister-in-law d this opinion with me. I did not read r the extract from May's letter which e given above. It had so startling an on me that I was afraid lest she might ct it with the cause. It took me a e of days to regain what I had lost after *eading of that letter*; and it shocked *find that twelve months* had made so little difference in my feelings as to permit the thought of the possibility of meeting Lord Eustace Annerley again to disturb my equanimity. Juliet grieved over the consequences, and worried herself to find out whether they proceeded from cold, or indigestion, or any other of those mole-hills that turn into mountains for an invalid; but she never guessed the true reason that I relapsed.

Indeed, so well did I conceal it, that a few days afterward, she started the subject herself.

"I have heard from Margaret," she said to me. "Has May mentioned to you that your old Brussels friend, Lord Eustace Annerley, has been calling at Gentian's Cross?"

"Oh, yes! She sent me a long description of his visit."

"You have not been so intimate with him lately, have you?"

"No! He left Brussels last year, and we lost sight of him."

"Your friendship did not extend to correspondence, then?"

"Oh, dear, no!"

"But you liked him very much, Katie, didn't you?"

"Yes! I did, but May didn't," I answered with an effort.

"Oh! May was a baby then. She will alter all her likes and dislikes now. He's good-looking, isn't he?"

"Most people think so."

"And his age?"

"How curious you are!" I said, with a faint smile. "The same as Hugh's would have been had he lived—thirty-eight."

"As old as that! Indeed! Mamma and Margaret seem to have taken a great fancy to him. They declare him to be everything that's charming. And he appears to be very attentive to May."

"He was always kind to May," I replied, remembering, with a guilty throb, for whose sake he had loved her. "And she was an ungrateful chit not to like him in return."

"She will get over that," said Juliet.

"I should think from your description and Margaret's that Lord Eustace was not the man to try and make friends with any one in vain. I wonder we have never met him before; but I suppose he has chief

lived abroad. His father, Lord Riversdale, was well known to my father, and, as you have heard, Lord Eustace was at school with poor Hugh. Their estates are good, but there's not much money in the family. But then they have blood to make up for it, you know, and that is everything. Is Lord Eustace what is called a marrying man, Katie."

I blushed up to my eyes. Why was my sister-in-law questioning me after this fashion? I could not disabuse my mind of the idea that she had really guessed or heard something of the affair between Lord Eustace and me, and wished to ascertain the truth. If—I asked myself quickly—if the Power family all liked him and approved of the match, and May really should (as Juliet had suggested) alter all her former likes and dislikes, would it be lawful for me then to indulge my heart's desire, and consent to marry him? How my unchastened nature throbbed once more at the idea! O Hugh! forgive me!

"Is he a likely man to marry?" repeated Mrs. Delancey.

"I should think he was," I answered, trembling. "More than once he spoke to me of the necessity of marriage to a man in his position. He is the eldest son, you know. He will be Lord Riversdale."

"Of course! That is what mamma says. Well, I hope, Katie dear, that May *will* get over her girlish nonsense about him, for *your* sake," she said, as I thought, significantly. "She seems to be in a fair way to do so, if we may trust Margaret's account," she added, laughing, as she left the room.

I lay on my sofa with burning cheeks, wondering how much or how little Juliet knew, and who had been the person to enlighten her on the subject which I had breathed to no one. As soon as I was alone again I drew the packets of May's letters from under the cushion at my head, and read over the description she had sent me of Lord Eustace's visit to Gentian's Cross.

"He seemed awfully pleased to see me, mothie," she wrote, in her girlish style of diction. "And after a little while I think I *was rather glad to see him too.* It looked *so like the dear old Brussels times to see him sitting opposite with his great eyes that you* used to be so cross with me for abusing. He asked after you, of course—I would have turned the wretch out-of-doors if he hadn't—and I told him you had had malaria, and gone to the sea for a change of air. He was surprised to find I had grown such a woman—the stupid! as if I should be anything else at my age—and asked me if I thought *he* had grown too. I told him he had grown the wrong way; and indeed he really does look younger than he did in Brussels, mothie. He has shaved off his beard, and it's *such* an improvement. Granny told him I was going to learn to ride; and he said he would come and give me some lessons himself if she liked, and I liked too. I was just about to say I wouldn't have him, when I remembered all my naughtiness in Brussels, and thought I would show you how improved I am. So I bowed and said, '*Thanks! very much!*' with quite the tone and air of the Dublin ladies; and granny and he settled it between them, and I believe he's coming to-morrow morning.

"Dearest mother, I'm getting so excited! It wants only two days now to the ball—and then a few stupid parties—and then I shall come to my own, own mother, and *never, never, never* leave her again for the thousandth part of a minute."

I smiled over the last enthusiastic sentence, and kissed the dear handwriting fondly. It was balm of Gilead to my weary spirit even while I smiled at it. But Juliet was right. My girl was certainly getting over her aversion to our friend; trying hard to like him, as she said, for my sake. Dear, dear child!

If she *did* grow to love him—and if, when we all returned to Ireland together, Eustace and I *should* meet again and renew our interrupted friendship—what might *not* come to pass?

I lay back on my pillows, exhausted with even this slight emotion, and gave myself up to idle, happy dreams, forgetful of all my resolutions, and of the utter want of interest displayed in me or my affairs by Lord Eustace Annerley since we had parted.

The next few days were very exciting ones for us poor exiles by the sad sea-waves, for in them we received long accounts from

May and Lady Power — accounts which brought the foolish tears to my eyes because of my inability to join in the scenes which they described—in which we heard of how beautiful my darling had looked at the drawing-room, and how immensely she had been admired at the ball, and how invitations for different parties were now pouring in upon her from all quarters of Dublin.

"And, among others, I have renewed my acquaintance with the family of Lord Riversdale," wrote Lady Power to her daughter, "who are staying in Dublin for the season. The mother has been dead, as you know, for years, but the earl's daughter, Lady Selina Annerley, does the honors of the house, and May and I dine there next Tuesday week."

"Next Tuesday week!" I exclaimed, in consternation; "I shall never get my child back at this rate, Juliet. I think Lady Power might be a little more considerate, when she knows how ill I am."

"Well, I think you could *hardly* have expected May to leave Dublin directly after her presentation, Katie," was my sister-in-law's reply.

"It is her own wish to come. She is longing to join me."

"Doubtless, but we can't always do as we wish in this world. For my own part, I felt certain this would be the upshot of her *début*. It would seem almost ridiculous to present a beautiful heiress like Frances publicly to the world, and then immediately send her out of the country before any one has the opportunity to show her any civility."

"Then I ought to have been told of it before. Her *début* might have been put off till next year."

"I don't think Frances would have liked that, Katie."

"She would like to do anything that I asked her to do. She has never disobeyed or neglected me in her life."

"I am sure she has not. But it does not follow it would not have been a disappointment to her. At all events, she seems to be enjoying herself now. Mamma says she was the life of the room at Lady Claretown's."

"*My darling! How* I wish I could see her, if only for a moment!" I said, with weak tears.

"Now, Katie, don't give way. We shall have the child here now before you are able to enjoy her company; or, if not, we will go back to her, which, after all, will be, I think, the wiser thing to do. It seems such a pity to cut short her first taste of gayety."

"I get on so slowly," I said, with a sigh.

"Oh, no, you don't. You can walk across the room quite firmly now to what you did a few days ago. You are getting on famously. I dare say we shall be back at Gentian's Cross by the beginning of July."

"You are too good to me," I said, as I kissed her. "Here am I keeping you from your husband and your children, and the London season, and treating you to all my ill-humored airs and graces, and you never so much as scold me in return."

"Don't be a goose, Katie," replied Juliet, returning my embrace. "You have nothing to thank me for. You have always been dearer to me than a sister."

. . . . . .

My child's letters still came regularly every morning to brighten my wearisome day, but after her presentation I fancied I detected a slight change in them. They were as affectionate as ever, but they seemed to me more hurried, more reticent, less detailed, than they used to be, and the little difference worried me. Juliet laughed at what she called my ridiculous nonsense, reminding me that May went out oftener, staid up later, and slept longer in the morning, probably, than she had ever done in her life before, which was ample explanation (if any were needed) for her sending me shorter and less carefully written letters. Yet I was not quite satisfied. My senses, sharpened by overweening anxiety and affection, felt that, although my child apparently related all that she did, said, and saw, she was keeping back something of greater importance than all the rest. Could it possibly be that she had become so engrossed and fascinated by the new world she had just entered upon that she desired to retard rather than hasten the moment of our meeting again? I had made myself delightfully miserable brooding over this idea which I would not do my own child

wrong of confiding even to Juliet, when the mystery was cleared up in the very last way in the world that I had anticipated.

Four weeks had now elapsed since the day of my darling's presentation. Party had succeeded party to prevent her joining me at Hastings, and Lady Power's whole time appeared to be taken up in writing letters to prove how utterly impossible it was that May should leave Dublin for the present; and my heart and soul were growing sick with waiting and longing for her. Still I had complete faith in her ultimate appearance, and hope carried me on from day to day, whispering that by the next post she might be able to fix the time of starting.

I had observed for the last week or ten days that Juliet had received several letters from home, the contents of which she had not confided to me, but I knew from her beaming face and cheerful manner that all must be well, and cared for no other news than such as my darling chose to send me.

Four weary, weary weeks, and then came the solution of the mystery.

One morning I received the following note from my daughter:

"My own sweet Mother: I am so excited I hardly know how to write to you; but of course granny will tell you all about it, and it shall be exactly as you wish. I know you'll have a good laugh over it, because of Brussels; but I'm not such a fool as I was then, darling, and it's everything to me that you like him. Granny says I'm awfully young; but you were younger, and it was all right, so I don't see why this shouldn't be, too. Only *you* must say so, or it will be all wrong. For, whatever happens, you must always be the *very, very* first person in the world to me, and so I tell him. But I fancy you will be *very pleased*, dearest mothie, and only think I'm not half good enough for your paragon. I shall only wait to get your answer to this before I start for Hastings, for, as I tell granny, this is the very time of all times that I must have my mother with me. Write by return, darling mammy, and dont scold me very much.

"Ever your own loving child,

"May.

"P. S. It's awfully sudden, isn't it? but *granny says it will be a good* thing to sober me, and *she thinks my head would* have been turned if I had gone on much longer as I have done this last month.

"P. P. S. I'm trying to like him very hard, and really I do a little. You should see how awfully polite I am to him when we're alone. Quite sentimental, I assure you."

. . . . . .

I read this letter through four or five times without stopping to think about it, and then I called hastily to my servant.

"Parker, go and ask Mrs. Delancey to come here *at once!* Say I *must* speak to her—make haste."

"Nothing wrong at home, I hope, madam?"

"Oh, no! no! only see I must Mrs. Delancey."

Parker flew off on her errand, and, in another minute, Juliet, wreathed in smiles and with her hands full of letters, came into my room.

"Juliet, what *is* the meaning of this?" I said, as I held out May's letter toward her.

"Hasn't May told you, then?"

"My dear—no! What is it? I can't understand a word of her letter. It's incoherent from beginning to end. *Do* tell me. What has happened?"

"Nothing but good news, Katie, so don't agitate yourself. You will be as proud as a peacock when you hear it. I was certain it was coming a week ago, but I didn't dare tell you, for fear of the effect a disappointment might have upon you at present. But it's all right now, dear."

"But what is it? Where is Lady Power's letter? I've never received it!" I exclaimed, anxiously.

"I have just brought it you. It was sent in with mine by mistake. Now, Katie, you mustn't tremble so. Prepare yourself for a great surprise. Frances has received a most excellent proposal."

"A proposal already?"

"Yes; and one of which you may justly be proud. You cannot but approve of it—it will be the grandest match in the county. And the girl appears to be as pleased as everybody else."

"But who—who is it?" I gasped.

"Can't you guess? You blind little bat! Who but your great Brussels chum—whom you were so sure May didn't like (you silly Katie!)—Lord Eustace Annerley! What do you say to that now?"

I didn't say anything to it. I neither said, nor saw, nor heard anything more. The shock, in my weak state, was too much for me, and I fainted.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"DO YOU LOVE HIM?"

When I recovered my senses, the bedroom window had been thrown open, my hair and forehead were wet with perfume, and Parker was vigorously fanning me.

"So tiresome!" I heard Juliet's voice exclaim; "and when Mrs. Power was getting on so nicely, too. What can have caused it? Are you sure she slept well last night, Parker? And did she take her medicine regularly?"

"What is it all about?" I inquired, shivering under the unaccustomed chill.

"Oh, nothing, dear, nothing!" replied Juliet, with the ready deceit which is always thought justifiable in the case of an invalid. "How do you feel now, Katie?"

"I am all right," I said, in a weak, bewildered manner; "but I must have slept very late. How high the sun is! And why—why am I on the sofa?"

"You have been a little ill, dear."

"A little ill—a little ill!" I repeated, vaguely. But here my eyes, roving aimlessly about the room, fell upon the packet of opened letters piled upon the toilet-table. In a moment the whole truth had come back to me. I groaned, and turned my face upon the sofa-cushions.

"What is the matter, Katie? What are you thinking of?" asked Juliet, anxiously.

"Oh, do leave me alone!" I said. "Do leave me by myself! I am tired; I wish to sleep."

Of course, my sister-in-law had a thousand and one objections to make before she would comply with my request. She was afraid I should faint again, or fall off the sofa, or want things which I could not procure for myself. At any rate, she begged that the maid might remain within call, so that I might summon her at a moment's notice.

But I would have none of it. I steadily refused to allow either Juliet or Parker to be witness of the way in which I faced this mortal agony.

I continued to reiterate my desire to be left by myself until they attributed my obstinacy to the captiousness attendant on convalescence, and consented to humor it. After arranging my cushions and tucking shawls about my feet, the door closed upon them, and I was alone. I had listened for the sharp click that should herald my freedom of action feverishly, and as soon as it fell upon my ear I threw off the wraps with which my kind nurses had encumbered me, tottered from the sofa, turned the key in the door, and sat down again with the letters from Ireland in my lap, and my head in my hands, trying to realize the intelligence I had just received. After the first shock, the news, instead of weakening, seemed to strengthen me. My hands trembled, it is true, and my senses were confused; but as I sat there I felt strong enough for anything, even to rush back to Dublin and tear my darling from Lord Eustace's sacrilegious arms. But the primary object I had in view was to collect my scattered thoughts, and try to unravel the puzzle so suddenly presented to me, and to think, think, think, and comprehend what was going to happen and what was the best thing to be done.

It is very difficult to write down our sensations under various circumstances in black and white. It is like attempting to describe the perfume of a rose; to put into hard, unfeeling words the tints of a sunset sky. All I can remember of the hour I allude to is that my paramount feeling was one of dismay that my own child was so soon to be *my own* no longer. Very few people can realize what parents feel at giving up the creature they have brought into the world, and looked upon throughout its infancy and childhood and budding youth as part and parcel of themselves, to the care and domin-

ion of another. It is hard to resign one's son to another woman; harder still to deliver over one's daughter to another man. Most parents worthy of the name suffer slightly at such a crisis; some suffer very deeply; and I thought, and still think, that no one ever suffered more under it than I did myself.

To give up my May, my darling, who had been my sole thought and care and happiness for sixteen years, to a husband—to resign all future claim to directing her actions, or employing her time, or occupying her attention—this of itself and under any circumstances would have been a bitter enough trial for me to struggle against. Still it was natural, it was but what I had expected and regarded as a certainty, if not to occur so soon, at least in the course of a few years. This disappointment, then, I could have wrestled with as a weakness unworthy of me, and overthrown; but the other fact—the fact of the man to whom my daughter was about to give herself—was utterly beyond the strength of my nature to regard with calmness. I *could not* believe it. May engaged to, and about to marry, Lord Eustace Annerley—Lord Eustace, who but twelve months back was so earnestly soliciting me—*me*, her mother, a woman just twice her age—to be his wife instead!

It was monstrous, incredible, not to be heard of! There appeared to me to be something sacrilegious and revolting in the idea that the lips that had sworn fidelity to the mother should repeat the same words to the daughter—that the man who had spoken of being a father to my child should become her husband—that I, whom he had implored to be his wife, should stand to him in the position of a mother!

I was so weak still that, as the thought of the last situation rose up in my mind, all its ludicrousness and apparent absurdity tickled my sense of the humorous, and I actually laughed at it; but the laughter brought tears, and to tears succeeded indignation, so that I was ready to rise from my couch and stamp about the room, and declare that it could not and it should not be.

What had I done that Lord Eustace Annerley *should dare to insult* me in the midst of my family? In what way had I so much injured him that he should seek to revenge himself upon me through my dearest possession—the person of my innocent child? I allowed this idea to surround and absorb me until I had worked myself into a state bordering on frenzy, and every circumstance of the case became altered and distorted in my jealous eyes.

Lord Eustace was no longer merely a faithless lover too quickly transferring his allegiance from one woman to another, but a fiend in the shape of man, who was determined to repay me for the disappointment I had unwillingly caused him by putting me to shame in the person of my daughter, and keeping the self-inflicted wound I had incurred for her sake continually open and bleeding. When I had arrived at this pitch of reasoning, I seemed to have but one desire—to get back as quickly as I could to Ireland, and open my darling's eyes to her danger. I was not thinking of May then, I was thinking of myself. It was mad jealousy, that my child should win and wear the love it had cost me so much to resign, that possessed me. May Heaven forgive me! How could I have been jealous of my May—Hugh's sweet, last legacy to me?

Yet here I feel I must write down the truth, whatever it may cost me; else, where were the use of my transcribing my sad history at all? And, looking back calmly and dispassionately on the events of that sad time, I know that I was less anxious for my daughter's welfare than for the satisfaction of my own feelings of disappointment and wounded vanity. I thought and said, and really believed (so deceptive is our human nature), that it was May's happiness for which I feared; but reflection, and self-examination, and prayer, have taught me that in that—as in all other things—I have been lamentably imperfect. I rang my bell violently, and desired Parker to summon Mrs. Delancey. When she appeared, I told her I had made up my mind at once to quit Hastings and return to Dublin. Juliet was thunderstruck. She did not consider me fit to undertake the journey, nor could she see the necessity for my leaving the seaside just as the fresh salt breezes were commencing

;o have some effect on me—just, too, as May was at liberty to join me there.

"You will undo all the good of the last nonth, Katie, if you continue obstinate," ihe said, persuasively. "And even if Fran-ces does delay her visit here for a week or ;wo, it will be but natural, you know, and what one must expect under the circum-stances. You have not yet told me what rou think about this grand engagement, but rou are very much delighted—I am sure of :hat."

"Juliet, it is because of this engagement :hat I must return to Gentian's Cross. I *nust* see May, and sound her on the subject of her feelings. How can I tell if she is nistaken or not? A girl of sixteen knows nothing about love, yet she will be miser-able without it. I cannot rest till I have seen my child and ascertained all she thinks and feels."

"But she will come to you if you are patient."

"I cannot be patient. I have waited to see her four weeks and more, and my pa-tience is exhausted. Juliet, it is of no use combating my resolution. I have deter-nined to go back to Dublin, and the sooner we start the better. What is the time? How soon can we go? When does the next train leave Hastings?"

My sister-in-law found it impossible to combat my resolution with any success, and, as my medical attendant considered that to thwart would be productive of worse con-sequences than to indulge me, I was per-nitted to have my own way; and the sec-ond evening after the receipt of the letters :hat had so much upset me found us at Holy-head, waiting to cross in the packet. How strange it seemed to me that each time I had stepped on board that steamer it had been with the same feelings of distrust and fear—with the same wicked, rebellious doubt whether it would not be better for all parties concerned in my troublesome exist-ence if a great storm were to arise in the night and the vessel never to reach the op-posite shore!

Worn out with the fatigue of the return journey, which had been undertaken with *scarcely less weakness* than it had been at first made, I slept but little on board the packet, and looked very unfit to go on to Dublin the next morning; but no persuasions could induce me to remain and rest at Kings-town. I was in a fever till I had clasped May in my arms and ascertained from her own mouth whether all I had heard was truth or a horrible, unholy dream.

I lay back in the railway-carriage as the train ran swiftly into the Dublin station, with closed eyes and fingers locked in pain, wearily wondering how much more of my poor strength it would require to get me alive to Gentian's Cross, I was so thorough-ly enervated by traveling. The morning, though in June, had dawned dully and rath-er chill, and I had felt the difference in the atmosphere keenly. But as we arrived in Dublin the sun broke out bright and warm —a happy omen for any one less despond-ent than I was. But I was pondering only upon Lord Eustace Annerley—his last inter-view with myself.

"Look, Katie," said Juliet, cheerfully, "what a lovely day we are going to have! I shall find it difficult to persuade you to go to bed, I expect, when we arrive at Gentian's Cross. Here is the station. Thank Heaven we have got over this tedious journey so well. And there—yes, actually there is that madcap Frances waiting on the platform for you. Why, at what unearthly hour can the child have risen to be here in time?"

At this intelligence every bitter thought I had encouraged was lost in the overwhelm-ing tide of my maternal love. I rose from my seat—I tottered from the carriage as soon as the train had stopped—I fell, speech-less and trembling with excitement, into my own child's arms, and felt, while they re-mained willing to infold me, *all the rest was nothing.* Oh! I *did* love my child heartily —fully—without lack or reserve. The few ill feelings which the fact of her being a woman like myself, and capable of winning the love which at so great a cost I had re-linquished, had excited, had died in a moment and forever as I gazed with eyes brimming over with tears of affection in her sweet, in-telligent, loving face, and thanked God who had given me such a treasure. Her strong, young arms squeezed my weakened frame

with an energy that gave me pain while she murmured the words, "Mothie dear! dear mothie!" again and again into my delighted ears. It was all sunshine then, both within and without. The blue June heaven was not less cloudy than my satisfied heart.

"Whoever expected to see *you* at the station?" said Aunt Juliet, as we all drove away together, May occupying the front seat beside me with her arm around my waist, devouring me every moment with kisses that poured new life into my veins more effectually than a dozen tonics could have done

"Well, I hardly expected it myself," she answered laughing, "for, when I proposed coming last night, grandmamma decidedly threw cold water on the idea, though I meant to meet you from the moment we received the telegram to say dear mothie was returning home."

"And how did you get your grandmamma's consent, then, my darling?" I inquired fondly.

"I never got it at all," answered May. "I took French leave, and came of my own accord. The carriage started at five this morning, so I had to be up pretty early. But I would have risen at midnight sooner than miss the first sight of my own sweet mother's face! I wish it were less thin and pale, dear mothie! That Hastings can't be much of a place. It doesn't seem to have done you any good at all."

"Oh, yes, it has!" replied Juliet quickly. "You mustn't judge your mother by what you see to-day, Frances. She is tired out with her long journey and her anxiety to see you. And so you came to meet us without grandmamma's knowledge. Upon my word, young lady, you are getting on! I don't think your mamma or I would have dared to take such a liberty at the same age, eh, Katie? Is it on the score of this grand engagement that you've turned your own mistress, Frances?"

At these words I glanced with painful anxiety at my darling. I had not dared to mention her engagement to her. I had almost dared to forget it in the joy of meeting her again. But Juliet's allusion recalled the bitter truth to me, and with it all my pain. I expected to see something like confusion on my young daughter's face at the first introduction of so delicate a subject; but with the exception of one bright triumphant blush, which made her look gloriously beautiful, she did not appear to be embarrassed by the allusion. On the contrary, her answer, though delivered saucily, was almost indifferent.

"I don't see what my engagement should have to do with it, Aunt Juliet; nor why you should call it 'grand.'"

"Don't you consider it so?"

"By no manner of means! nor Lord Eustace either."

"O Frances! how unromantic you are! I expected to hear you deliver a rhapsody on him on the very first opportunity."

"Oh! you must look to dear mothie for that," cried my girl, as she turned and embraced me anew. "She'll rhapsodize on him by the hour if you'll listen to her, won't you, darling? I confess I've been behaving rather well to him since you've been away—remarkably well, I think I may say, considering all things; but now you've come back I mean to return to my former style of behavior, and leave all the compliments to you. I sha'n't be able even to *look* at anybody but yourself for the next month, mothie. It does seem such an age since you have been away."

I was thankful to drop the subject, and let my child wander from her train of thought into expressions of delight at our reunion. But Mrs. Delancey was too curious not to pursue it.

"I am not going to let you off in this way, Frances. Don't forget how little we have heard of this wonderful engagement, and have pity on my curiosity. Is he very good-looking, my dear?"

"Ask mothie," returned the girl, with a laugh; "*I* don't think him so."

"But you're very fond of him, I suppose?"

"Not half so fond as I am of *her*."

"You shouldn't say that, my May," I remonstrated, in a low, weak voice.

"But it's true, darling; and you know it is. How could I like anybody as well as I do you?"

"A husband should come first of all," remarked her aunt.

"Oh, bother husbands!" cried my child quickly, and she *did* blush this time. "For Heaven's sake, don't begin to talk of *them*, Aunt Juliet!"

"Why, my dear, has there been no mention on the subject yet, then? Have not grandmamma and Lord Eustace said anything about the wedding-day?"

I felt my breath come shorter as I waited for May's reply. She grew confused, and looked down, and began to plat the fringe of my traveling-shawl.

"They *may* have," she said evasively.

"Oh! you rogue; you *know* they have!"

"Well, grandmamma *did* say something about the end of next month, but I was not going to agree to anything till mother came and said it was all right."

And my girl glanced shyly in my face as she concluded, as if to guess my sentiments before I uttered them. The end of next month! One month—and then the commencement of my desolation. I could not contemplate or realize it. I shut my eyes and shuddered.

"Mothie is ill!" cried May in alarm.

"It is only fatigue—the shaking of the railway," said Juliet, as she searched in her bag for perfume and a fan. I lay still and let them minister to me. I could not have spoken at that moment to save my life. I hardly spoke again until we reached Gentian's Cross.

I don't think Lady Power was overpleased at my unexpected return, but it was not a time to express displeasure. Whether with my will, or against it, I was conveyed to my bedchamber as soon as I arrived, in order that I might rest from the fatigues of my journey.

"Rest! I felt as if there were no more rest in this world for me. May was kneeling beside my sofa, with her fresh, cool young cheek laid against my heated countenance. I knew I ought not to enter on exciting topics, but I could not help it, and as soon as we were alone I began:

"May, my own darling! tell me the *truth, the very, very truth! Do you love him?*"

I had seized her face between my hands, and was gazing into her eyes, down to her very soul. She could not turn away—she could not deceive me. She reddened up to the roots of her hair, but no glow of love came into those clear, gray, beautiful orbs.

"Well, of course I do, mothie—at least, I suppose I do."

"But to 'suppose' won't do, my own child. You must be sure, *quite* sure, or you will be miserable for life. You don't know what an important step marriage is."

"How *can* I be quite sure when I've never had a lover before? I like him very well. I like him awfully, mothie. By-the-way, he gave me such a lovely locket yesterday, with my monogram on it in emeralds and opals. Opals are unlucky, ar'n't they, dear?"

"Heaven forbid!" I said, with a shudder. "But never mind the locket now, May. Tell me how you came to love Lord Eustace so quickly. When did you find it out?"

"I don't know. I didn't want to be engaged to him a bit, only grandmamma made such a fuss about it; and really their place in Wicklow is lovely, mother. Such a park, I forget how many acres, but it's *enormous;* and the house is very respectable—at least it will be when he's had it properly done up. I mean to live at Gentian's Cross, though, when it's mine."

"You'll have to live where your husband chooses, my child," I said, mournfully.

"Well, then, I'll make him choose Gentian's Cross, for it will be the same thing in the end. He's going to send an Arab over for me to ride next week. The best thing he does is riding. Mothie, you'll be quite astonished to see how I prance up and down the park! I think I like horses better than anything in the world—except *you*, my sweet, sweet old darling!" With another shower of kisses.

"But I want to hear about Lord Eustace, May," I said, with an effort, "and you run off upon horses."

"Well, they're much the nicer of the two," laughed May.

"My child! you will make me wretched if you talk like that. It's not right, it

you should not jest on so serious a subject."

"I wasn't jesting. It's truth. Eustace is very nice, of course, and all that sort of thing; and he pays me, oh! *such* compliments, mothie, I scream sometimes to hear them!—but I *do* love riding!—it's the jolliest thing on earth!"

"May! May!" I cried again, "tell me the truth. Do you *love* Lord Eustace Annerley?"

My earnestness startled her; the tears in my eyes frightened her; she became sober in a moment.

"Now, darling old mum! don't alarm yourself, and I'll be serious. Yes, I *do!*—so there! I've quite altered my opinion of him since we were in Brussels. I think I was a little jealous in those days, darling, because he always stuck so close to you, and you seemed to think him such a paragon. But now I see that he's an awfully handsome man, and a great favorite in society; and though we don't lay any stress upon titles, mother—we're not quite so snobbish as that, are we?—yet it's nicer, you know, to be Lady So-and-so, than plain Mrs. ——; at least I fancy you will like it for me. And then, marrying a man as well-off as Lord Eustace will enable me to be with you, and have you with me as much as ever I choose; and I believe that was the chief thing that made me like him. For I told him I would *never* leave you; and he said at once, of course, I shouldn't, and we would all live together. So that's settled; and I'll be your spoiled baby to my life's end, darling, and take such care of you that you shall never fall sick again, or have any bother whatever! Say it's nice, dear mothie, and that you're very glad of it; and then—and then, I shall want nothing more in this world to complete my happiness!"

She threw her dear arms round me as she spoke; her tears were on my cheek, her sweet face hidden against my own.

What could I do but press her closely to me, and pray God her future might prove happy?

How could I find time to groan in my inner spirit at the rapidity with which he seemed to have forgotten the past, when he had laid his present as a free-will offering at the feet of my own child, and she appeared so willing to accept it?

Only—even as I blessed her—my heart sunk beneath the fatal knowledge *that she did not love him!*

CHAPTER XXX.

WHAT DID IT ALL PORTEND?

This conviction gained such ground from subsequent conversations I held with my child during that day, that when the evening came I felt I could contain myself no longer, and begged a private interview with Lady Power. I felt too ill to leave my bedroom, and, as I understood afterward, my mother-in-law expressed some surprise at my summoning her there. But after a slight delay she entered statelily, and drew a chair with ceremonious politeness to the side of my sofa.

"Lady Power," I commenced nervously (I had never quite got over my first impressions of Hugh's mother), "I hope you will excuse my troubling you to come up-stairs; but I want so much to talk to you about this engagement of dear May's. It is so sudden—so unexpected—and I have heard so little; I am sure you will understand my anxiety on the subject."

"I shall be most happy to give you any information you wish for, Katharine; but, as for your feeling anxious, there is not the least necessity for that. I think you might trust *me* to look after our dear Frances's welfare in all things."

"Oh! I am sure of that—quite sure!—only I am her mother, you see, and of course—"

"She is my *heiress!*" interrupted Lady Power, grandly; "and it is incumbent on me, above all other people, to watch most carefully over her interests and my own. The honor of my late husband's family is bound up in the career of that child!"

"Do you consider this marriage with Lord Eustace Annerley will be for her good?" I demanded anxiously.

"In what way, Katharine?"

"In every way. I know it is an advantageous match in point of position and advancement; but I have been questioning May closely to-day, and I cannot think, from her answers, that she really loves him."

"I think you were wrong to question her on such a subject. It was indelicate—unnecessary—"

"Unnecessary! O Lady Power! how can the child be happy if she does not love her husband?"

"She will regard him quite as much as can be required, you may rest assured of that. Frances is too young yet to be able to analyze her feelings. I should be surprised if she did so. All that is necessary will come by-and-by."

"But supposing it never comes?" I suggested eagerly.

"Are you questioning the advantages of her marriage with Lord Eustace," demanded Lady Power, in a tone of surprise, "when it will be the grandest match of the season? He, heir to an earldom, and the possessor of some of the best estates in Ireland; and she, coming into the finest income in the country! Why, what can you be thinking of? What on earth could you desire more?"

"There is twenty-two years' difference between their ages," I said mournfully.

"What of that? Frances, it is true, is very young; but Lord Eustace Annerley is in the prime of life; and if a man of his standing and position chooses to honor so young a lady with his preference, no reasonable person will be found to raise an objection to the marriage. I consider that Frances, notwithstanding her beauty and her expectations, is a very lucky girl—an uncommonly lucky girl—and so does everybody in and about Dublin; I can tell you that. She is the envy of every *débutante* of the season, and the marvel of their mothers."

"But supposing May never loves him?" I repeated; "what will she do then? How will houses, and horses, and parks, make up to her for the greatest want a woman can feel—the lack of affection?"

"Why should you doubt that she will love him, Katharine?" demanded my mother-in-law, sharply.

"*I don't know*; I cannot tell; only I love her so much myself—and I cannot help being afraid."

"This is the most extraordinary thing I ever experienced in my life," returned Lady Power. "You—who were really nobody yourself, and did not bring sixpence to your husband—to cavil at a marriage for your daughter that a duchess might accept with thanks! Had it not been for me, Frances might have married as unfortunately as you did; and yet, instead of receiving the gratitude I have a right to expect in return, I am forced to listen to a string of complaints and unnecessary misgivings. You are most unreasonable, Katharine."

"I am sorry," I answered, meekly; "but, Lady Power, you do not—you cannot know what I feel. She is my only child, remember! And though Hugh and I married so young—I was a year younger than dear May—yet we loved each other as fondly and passionately as many older people, and—"

"Katharine," said Lady Power, as she rose from her seat and shook out her skirts, "I would rather not hear any more upon this subject. You use words that shock me. I should not have alluded to your own marriage had you not provoked me to do so; but you force me to say that I would rather Frances never married at all than betrayed feelings so unbecoming to her sex and station in life as those you mentioned. I have lived many years longer in this world than you have, but I could not bring myself even now to use such expressions as you do, in reference to my own feelings. And when I consider your age at the time, Katharine, I blush for you!—really, I blush for you!"

"There is no need to blush," I answered, hotly, though I was blushing myself at the same moment. "I only wish I could be sure my child loved Lord Eustace Annerley as I loved Hugh!"

"You will let me go now, Katharine, will you not?" said Lady Power, with an air as though she entreated her ears might not be further polluted by any strong speeches.

"One word, Lady Power. Nothing has been settled about the time of the marriage, I suppose?"

"You must know very little of the w

er thing to be done on these occasions, Katharine, if you suppose I acceded to Lord Eustace's proposals for Frances's hand without discussing the probable length of the engagement. He is not a boy. He has nothing to wait for. As soon as the necessary preparations can be completed, there is no reason the marriage should be delayed."

"Surely he might wait a twelvemonth," I replied. "May is such a child; it is cruel to part us so soon; and her education is not yet completed."

"It can go on as well after her marriage as before."

"But are *my* wishes nothing?" I cried, bitterly. "Is her mother's happiness of no account? I seem to have been left out of the matter altogether, Lady Power."

It was not often I had ventured to speak to my mother-in-law so determinately. The tone of my voice seemed to take her by surprise; but she was equal to the occasion.

"You astonish me, Katharine. I fear your illness has made you regard things in a very strange light. If you love your daughter as you say you do, I should think that *her* happiness would be your first consideration. Lord Eustace also may be supposed to have some voice in the matter; and he and Frances have agreed to fix a day in the end of July or beginning of August for the celebration of their nuptials. I shall take upon myself, naturally, to see that the great event is properly conducted, and Frances, I have little doubt, will not be satisfied without your advice on all matters connected with the trousseau; so I trust you will strive to curb any little weak, foolish objections you may feel with respect to the time fixed, and not permit the desire for your own selfish gratification to interfere with your daughter's happiness or your own recovery."

Lady Power, who had been on the eve of departure for the last ten minutes, here made a move toward the door.

Was I weak? *was* I selfish? was I really thinking only of myself and my own wishes, and not of my precious child's welfare or *misery?*

I covered my face with my hands, and tried to unravel the mystery of my mother-in-law's words.

Perhaps so; perhaps so! Guilty conscience awakened to remind me of my disappointed hopes and desires, and to ask why I should shrink from seeing my daughter accept what I had been so loth to resign myself.

"By-the-way," continued Lady Power, as she returned for a moment to my sofa, "I thought Lord Eustace Annerley was such a great friend and favorite of yours in Brussels, Katharine. How comes it that you make objections to him now?"

"It's not to him, especially," I stammered, in reply. "I am thinking of her—of my Hugh's child. I should never forgive myself if her marriage turned out an unhappy one."

"If that is all, you are quite safe in trusting *my* judgment in the matter," said Lady Power, coldly, as she turned away again. "I do not consider our interview to have been a complimentary one to myself, Katharine. I shall try and forget it as soon as possible. Meanwhile I trust you will endeavor to bring some of your former opinions with regard to Lord Eustace to bear upon him in favor of your daughter's suitor."

What could she mean? How much, or how little, did she know of the intimacy that had existed between Lord Eustace and myself?

Lady Power's parting words set me thinking until my brain burned. Could *he* have betrayed me? Could *she* be correct in her analyzation of my feelings?

The first suspicion I soon dismissed with the scorn it deserved. Lord Eustace might not have proved to be all I believed him, but he was a gentleman and a man of honor. Under any circumstances a woman's secret would be safe with him; under *these* circumstances, safest of all. But the second question was not so easily answered.

Did I shrink from the contemplation of this marriage because I feared Lord Eustace might not make my child a happy wife, or because I dreaded the effect of daily communication with him—and in so peculiar a position—on my own mind? God knows I found it impossible to decide. One was sure of one thing—that if my

child's happiness could be secured by walking over my bleeding heart, I would bear the suffering cheerfully, gladly, for her dear sake.

Her welfare, then, *was* the most precious thing on earth to me. When I had arrived at this conclusion I was, comparatively speaking, happy. I felt I had a little offering to make to Hugh; a little sacrifice of self to lay upon the altar of my love for him, in expiation of the unfaithful thoughts I had once held toward his memory. And the first rough place my wounded feet must tread in pursuing this path of duty appeared to be the absolute necessity of speaking to Lord Eustace myself, and ascertaining the reality of his affection for my child. The mere idea of this ordeal made me shrink. I knew it would be a terrible trial for me to go through; I hardly knew how I should do it; but I felt that, at any risks, it had to be done—and that without letting him guess how much it cost me to perform.

I had questioned May and Lady Power, and I had got no satisfaction out of either of them. My child had no ideas beyond the present moment; her grandmother, no ambition except to see her advantageously settled. It was left to me to probe the lover's heart, and see how deep the vein of his affection ran.

To me! *to me!*

I set my teeth together as I contemplated what lay before me; but I was firm in my resolve. I rang the bell for Parker, and desired her to assist me in my dressing. The bedroom had become a prison-house to me; I could remain within its four walls no longer. This was no time for inertion or indifference. How could I tell what they might not be doing down-stairs during my absence?—whether the wedding-day might not be fixed, the trousseau ordered, and even the marriage celebrated, while I lay on my sofa grieving over the inevitable? I think I must have had a little delirium in my brain that evening, so many queer fancies floated through it as I hurried on my dress. I know Parker was most earnest in her entreaties that I should not go down-stairs, and that I combated all her persuasions successfully, even to preventing her summoning Juliet to the warfare.

They were all much astonished when I appeared among them in the drawing-room. They had finished dinner, and were sitting before their coffee, with all the windows open to the flower-garden. Juliet gave an exclamation of horror as I entered the circle; May, one of delight. I had half expected, half hoped, half feared, that the family party would have been increased by *one* that evening. I wished so much to meet him first among them all, that there might be no chance of my betraying what I felt; but he was not present. Even his name was not mentioned. Perhaps Lady Power had cautioned her daughters on the subject. Any way, the merest commonplaces formed the only topics of conversation, and dinners, dresses, and characters, were discussed until I felt weary and dispirited again, and had no alternative but to return to my room, where my child accompanied me. As we entered it, she dipped her fingers mechanically into the stoup of holy-water which hung beside the door. Her action recalled another dread to me.

"May!" I exclaimed, suddenly, "you know that Lord Eustace is a Protestant. How will you get on with a husband of different faith from your own?"

"Oh! he has promised not to interfere with my faith, mother," she said, indifferently. "Grandmamma looked out for that, of course; and I believe there will be something put about it in the marriage settlements."

"I dare say there will; but I didn't quite mean that. How will you be able to sympathize with a person whose opinions are all diametrically opposed to your own? You know that there is no medium in this country. They are red-hot either one way or the other."

"I don't think Lord Eustace is 'red-hot' any way, mother. I don't believe he has any religion at all."

"But that is worse than anything, my darling. "O May! if he should make *you* careless, it would break my heart!"

"He shall never do that, mother. Do you suppose I could possibly forget all that you and dear Mère Anastase and the fathers have taught me?"

"No, darling, I hope not; or what your own dear father was, and would have wished you to be. It was for his sake I called you May, dear."

"You have told me so, mother. Besides, you know grandmamma is as proud as Lucifer, and would never hear of any slight cast on the family faith; so don't you be afraid. Eustace may go to his old Protestant church as much as he likes; he will never get me there."

"But it might be the cause of a quarrel between you."

"Then he must quarrel, that's all."

"May, you make me wretched!"

"Sweet mother! it's only my fun! *Quarrel with me?* Why, he'd bite his head off first? He thinks I'm an angel of perfection, and can never praise me sufficiently. I believe he'd turn Catholic himself, if I made a point of it. Did I show you the present of forget-me-nots he gave me?"

"No."

"I'll go and fetch them."

She sprang away as she spoke, and I turned to my sofa. The allusion to forget-me-nots had awakened an unpleasant remembrance in my bosom; but it mattered little. Each word that was spoken now seemed fraught with pain. I supposed it was inevitable and must continue so, at least for a while. When I had met Lord Eustace and spoken to him, I fancied it would be better. In a few moments May returned, and placed a morocco case in my hands. I fancied that the shape was familiar to me. I opened it hurriedly. It contained the identical set of ornaments, wrought in blue enamel and gold, which he had pressed on my acceptance, and I had refused, the day he came from Paris and asked me to be his wife. My hand shook so at the discovery, that I could hardly hold the trinkets.

"Ar'n't they pretty?" demanded May, innocently. "Did you ever see any like them before, mothie? He brought them from Paris expressly for me (so he says), as a *gage d'amour*. Romantic creature! I believe he expected me to look sentimental over them, but I didn't. I like necklaces and ear-rings well enough; but sentiment is altogether beyond me. I leave that to you, mothie."

"They are very pretty," I assented, feebly, as I put the case back in her hands.

He had brought them from Paris expressly for *her*, as a *gage d'amour*. I could have respected him more if he had flung them into the sea. He must have foreseen that I should recognize them. What did it all portend?

CHAPTER XXXI.

"I MEET LORD EUSTACE."

I LAY awake for many hours that night, cogitating on the probabilities of my first interview with Lord Eustace Annerley; when and where it would take place; what we should feel and what we should say; and of course everything happened quite differently from what I anticipated. It always does in this confusing world. I had not risen from my bed the following morning when May came dancing like a sunbeam into my room.

"How are you, darling mother? Grandmamma has a letter from Eustace to say he will dine with us this evening. I knew the creature would come poking here directly you came home. I believe the only reason he wants to marry me is, so that he may sit in your pocket for the rest of his life."

"May, my dearest, how wild you are! Any one who didn't know you might greatly misunderstand your meaning. Does not Lord Eustace often dine here?"

"Not very often, thank goodness! I hate to be stared and goggled at while grandmamma and Aunt Margaret and Aunt Blanche all pretend to look the other way. It's odious."

I tried to laugh it off.

"Lord Eustace must have altered very much from what he was in Brussels, my darling, if he so far forgets himself as to do anything to make you feel uncomfortable in public. He was so particularly reticent and quiet in society."

"Now, mothie!" cried May, as she stopped my mouth with kisses, "I'm not

going to listen to a tirade of compliments on your paragon. I've gone the length of accepting him (all for your sake, darling!), but if I am to hear his name all day long I shall get sick of him before we are married. Grandmamma has given me such doses of him and Lady Selina, and Lord Riversdale, and the estates in Wicklow, that I have begun to look upon the whole family as a species of Gregory's powder, that it will take a great deal of jam to make it go down. Besides, you will have Eustace to yourself in a few weeks, you know, and then you can pat each other on the back all day long. He'll be your son, of course. Doesn't that seem funny, mother?"

"Very funny, my darling."

"Fancy having a son older than yourself! Won't it feel queer? Do you remember the first day you met him at the Chesters, when he had pulled me out of the hole in the ice, and you were so cross because I said he was *old* and *black*?"

"Not *cross*, my May, only surprised. Grown-up people look so different in the eyes of children from what they do in those of their equals."

"Yes! I see that *now*," said my girl (as she drew herself up with quite the air of being the equal of her *fiancé* and myself!). "I don't think Eustace looks so old as he did then; but still he's more than double my age, and I often tell him he ought to be everlastingly obliged to me for taking compassion on such an old frump as he is!"

I could not help laughing.

"He must think you a very saucy girl, my May, and be very good to let you take such liberties with him."

The conversation was a great trial to me, and I found it easier to sustain by forced gayety than in sober seriousness.

"Oh! as to that, I should be very much surprised to hear him make an objection to anything I did. He treats me just as if I were grown up. Mother, I couldn't permit him to do otherwise," said my grandiloquent May.

"Of course not, darling! *I* don't think you grown up, my sweetest—you will *never* be grown up *to me*; but a girl who is old *enough to be married* is old enough to be respected, and I am very glad to find your engagement has made you so dignified and womanly."

"Oh! as to that," she repeated, "I dare say I should be giddy enough if Eustace were so too; he's too old to do anything but sit and gape at me. *Really and truly*," continued my child, emphatically, "he is. Julia Bowers (I wrote to you once, you know, about having dined at the Bowers's with grandmamma) is engaged to such a nice young fellow, only two-and-twenty, and they *do* have such fun together. Julia told me they are always skating or dancing or picnicking, and they're awfully fond of one another. But then he's only a clerk, you know, mothie, or something of that sort."

"What of that, dear May, if Julia loves him?" I asked anxiously.

"Well, they won't be able to marry for years to come, and then it will be a very scrubby sort of affair. Still I must say they seem to enjoy themselves. She danced with no one else at the last ball."

"Lord Eustace can dance—can he not?"

"I don't know whether he *can*. I know he doesn't. He stood by grandmamma the whole of that evening talking to her or me. And what's more, he prevented my waltzing. I *was* so cross!"

"How did he prevent it?"

"Told grandmamma he didn't think any woman should dance round dances (as if men could dance them alone!), and that he should never allow his wife to do such a thing. And then grandmamma wouldn't let me accept any more partners! But I'll pay him out, some day!"

The defiant tone alarmed me.

"May, my own darling," I said earnestly, as I squeezed her bonny head against my bosom. "Lord Eustace is not at all irregular in his disapprobation of waltzing. Many men have the same dislike to seeing their wives and daughters spinning round the room in the arms of comparative strangers. It is far better he should be too careful of you than too careless. But you mustn't talk about 'paying him out.'"

"But I shall, mothie! I'd give up dancing if you asked me to do it

won't for him. Do you think I'm going to take all the trouble of marrying him, and, then, not to have my own way?"

"But you must try to make his way yours, May. You are bound to obey your husband in all things. You will have to promise to do so."

"Well, then, I'd better not marry him."

"I really think you'd better not!"

I did not feel, then, that my own selfish desires prompted this advice. Under any circumstances, it seemed a terrible thing to me that May should marry a man for whom she had evidently little affection. But I uttered the admonition so earnestly that I amused my child instead of impressing her. She burst out laughing.

"How solemn you are, dear mothie! One would think you really meant what you said. Of course, I must marry the creature, and, I dare say, I shall obey him, and all that sort of thing, quite as much as is necessary, but, by hook or by crook, I mean to dance. And now are you going to get up, dear, or will you have your breakfast in bed? Do have it in bed, and let me wait on you as I used to do."

And for an hour afterward my loving girl, to the scandal of Lady Power and her aunts, toiled up and down the big staircases, bearing various dainties which she thought would tempt my jaded appetite. The mere sight of her sweet, fresh face, even under circumstances that caused me so much anxiety, was sufficient to give me new strength, and I regained more during that first day of my return to Ireland than I had done all the time at Hastings.

I confess I looked forward with great dread to the evening and coming presence of Lord Eustace, but I had determined to go up-stairs early to dress for dinner, and not to descend again until the whole party was assembled. Thus I thought I should meet him first before May and all the Powers, and in such company I felt certain I should be able to command myself and behave like any ordinary being. I had been lying on a sofa in the drawing-room after luncheon, listening to my child's sprightly conversation, and gradually becoming more and more drowsy as the languid heat of the summer afternoon pervaded the shaded apartment, and the droning hum of the insects among the flowers came through the windows which, on the garden-side, were opened to the ground. One by one my sisters-in-law slipped out of the room to pursue their several occupations; only May and I were left together, and the last thing I can remember is my child placing another pillow under my head, and quietly fanning me with a screen snatched from a neighboring table. Then I conclude I dropped off to sleep in beautiful unconsciousness, that I was passing from one state to the other, and bright May, unable to stand the silence and solitude any longer, passed out into the sunlit garden, so much more congenial to her youth and spirits, and left me sleeping on the sofa by myself.

. . . . . .

Some one suddenly opened the door. I waked, with a start and an indistinct notion of where I was. Some one exclaimed: "I beg your pardon. I did not see any one was here." And the voice recalled me to the truth. I raised myself into a sitting posture; my whole countenance overspread by a burning blush.

It was Lord Eustace Annerley who stood before me. I recognized his figure, and withdrew my gaze. I did not dare to raise my eyes to his—poor, guilty creature that I was! The keen pang with which I had parted with him was so vivid in my remembrance I could not but believe I should see it reflected in his face.

"O Lord Eustace!" I stammered, lamely.

"Mrs. Power!" he ejaculated (and if he were acting he acted so well there was no feeling but that of surprise apparent in his voice), "how glad I am to meet you again! I was prepared for your coming, of course, but hardly to see you down-stairs so soon. I hope you are very much the better for your change."

He had shaken my hand as he commenced speaking, and now he took a seat on the sofa beside me, and continued his airy, *nonchalant* inquiries.

"I am better, thank you."

"A charming place, Hastings, is it not? So quiet and free from the nuisance of ex-

ursionists. In what part of the town did you lodge?"

I mentioned the terrace where we had had apartments.

"Ah! I know it. A very nice position. What a disappointment it must have been for you having to go away just as your daughter was about to be presented."

"And about to be engaged," I added, with a faint smile. It does not seem much to require courage to say, but those few words were born of a very strong resolution on my part to be bold.

"And to be engaged!" repeated Lord Eustace, calmly. "I hope you quite approve, Mrs. Power, of my determination to run off with your pretty May."

"I could never *approve* of that in anybody. It is too much to ask me to say—at all events, so soon."

"But the idea is not distasteful to you?"

I saw the fingers which were lying interlaced upon my lap begin to tremble. I rose hastily, nearly upsetting my equilibrium by the unusual exertion, and took a book off the table—anything to handle and play with that might draw his attention off those wretched fingers.

"You have no objection to make to me personally?" said Lord Eustace, putting his question into another form.

"Why should I have? Your birth and position are above what we had any right to expect, and your character as a gentleman is unimpeachable. But my child is very young."

"*Too* young—do you think—for me?" he demanded.

The position I was placed in was a terrible one. I was longing to do battle for my child's innocence; to persuade this man to whom she had promised herself that to marry her before he was fully persuaded she loved him as a woman can and should love her husband would be to ruin their mutual happiness for life. But my hands were tied. I feared lest in each objection brought forward he might detect a lingering *penchant* for himself—a jealousy of being superseded by my daughter. Could I have read *his heart I should* have known I had no cause for fear—that Lord Eustace thought of me only as the coquette and trifler his last words had pronounced me to be.

"Oh, no!" I answered, quickly; "a man of your age is young enough to marry the youngest woman, but May is very childish, Lord Eustace—her ideas are by no means matured—and I am afraid sometimes lest she may not perfectly know her own mind upon this subject."

"You surprise me, Mrs. Power! I have found May so much advanced for her years, at least in my estimation. I have seldom met a girl of sixteen with greater determination or more fixed opinions."

"It is her determination that alarms me, Lord Eustace. Her mind is not sufficiently advanced to direct her judgment properly, and yet her will is so strong I often fear the two will clash. She is just like poor Hugh!"

"Well, Hugh had the necessary determination to make an early choice, and as far as we can judge he would have abided by it. He possessed another gift, Mrs. Power, that of attracting and retaining an ardent affection. I think we can hardly wish a better lot for May!"

"We cannot tell what mistakes Hugh's after-life might not have proved him to have committed. He was taken away before he had had time to feel the consequences of his rashness."

"You, who have been so very faithful to his memory, can hardly be the one to credit him with the possession of less fidelity than your own."

I fancied there was a touch of sarcasm in this last speech of Lord Eustace, and I could only be silent under the insinuation.

"And so you really think my promised wife doesn't love me?" he recommenced with a cheerful air that belied his words, and was very inappropriate to the occasion.

"Oh, no, indeed! God forbid that I should! Only—only—she is very heedless, and her happiness is the first consideration in the world to me. It is very, very hard for me to part with her!" I said brokenly, as I hid my face in my hands.

My companion was silent. He did not offer by word or act to express sympathy in my distress; and when, after a moment

pause, I ventured to look up at him, he was leaning on the mantel-piece, with rather an amused—or so I thought it—expression on his countenance.

"Lady Power warned me I might expect a little opposition on your part, and it is most natural you should feel the separation, at all events at first. But I trust that a little time and persuasion is all that will be needed to reconcile you to the idea."

"I shall be guided entirely by my daughter's feelings," I answered rather curtly, for his *nonchalant* manner was exasperating me. "If May loves you, it is all I care for."

"I am quite willing to undergo the ordeal of May's decision," he replied in a self-satisfied tone. "I am not flattering myself too much, I hope, in imagining this to be the only objection you entertain toward me as a son-in-law!"

"There *could* be no other objection, Lord Eustace." (For worlds I would not have let him read the millionth part of the thoughts that were coursing through my mind.) "May's happiness is the one supreme object of my existence. You knew that from the first day we met. Whatever furthers it must be welcome to me—whatever retards it distasteful. I only live for my child, and the memory of my child's father!"

I had spoken with great fervor. I had thought that whether he sympathized with it or not, Lord Eustace must be a little touched by my maternal anxiety. And the light, not to say frivolous, tone in which he answered me, jarred on my overstrung feelings.

"Well, then, let me trust you will learn to regard me, at all events, as a useful coadjutor in carrying out your wishes. I always told you in Brussels, remember, that, however long it might take, I should succeed at last in conquering May's aversion to me. And I think that without vanity I may say I have succeeded. But here comes my lady to speak for herself," he said, as my girl's figure appeared upon the garden steps. "Well, my darling," he continued effusively, as he went forward to receive her; "and *where have you been all this while?*"

"*You here!*" *cried May, while she submitted to rather than* received the embrace which Lord Eustace bestowed upon her, and which so sealed, as it were, his ownership of my child that a shudder ran through my frame at the sight. "I thought you were coming to dinner. It's not five o'clock yet!"

"What a flattering reception," laughed her *fiancé;* "but you don't mean it, May; I am sure you don't."

"I am quite sure I do. And I suppose you waked up dear mothie into the bargain, and when she was just having a nice little nap. I shouldn't have left you, darling, if I had thought you were going to be disturbed in this way," she added, speaking to me.

"It is of no consequence, my child; Lord Eustace came in here quite accidentally, but I had already had a long sleep."

"You don't look much the better for it, mothie. What's the matter? Has that man been worrying you?" with a jerk of her head toward my companion.

"My dear! how should he?" I answered with a blush.

"Unless to hear your praises worries her, my queen," said Lord Eustace. He came behind her as he spoke, and wound his arm about her waist, and looked down fondly on her. I have wondered since if he really felt what his eyes expressed, or whether he had any sinister motive in feigning such a mighty passion; but I thought, then, I had never seen him nor any man look with such pride of possession on a woman before. May repressed his ardor rather abruptly, but the sight made me feel just a little weak and faint-hearted. I pleaded fatigue, and the necessity of lying down before the dinner-bell rang, as an excuse for going to my room, and made my retreat as quickly as possible. Even when I had locked my door on all the outside world, I could hear May's light laugh through the open windows, and, creeping to observe her from behind the curtain, watched her wandering with her lover up and down the garden, picking the flowers, playing with her dog, doing anything and everything to prevent his fixing her attention, while his glowing, passionate eyes followed every movement of her graceful child-

m, every expression on her sunny, g face. They made a splendid as they sauntered up and down the ogether; he, with his dark, southern his fine matured figure, his glowing, tual eyes; she, with her golden hair, r half-Irish, half-English face, her limbs and girlish, easy grace. I t of my own blighted life, my fading nd disappointed hopes, and felt my ıl child was a far more appropriate ›r him than I could ever have been. *only loved each other!*

t was the grave suspicion that was me unhappy now. The rest would emed easy beside it. I could see that ıs proud of her engagement and her and that deeper feelings still were in Lord Eustace's breast regarding 'et I could not help doubting, my considerably augmenting my fears; cared for each other as Hugh and I ed, for instance, or as Julia Bowers 'or the young clerk, of whom my ıd spoken so contemptuously that g; or whether, if her girlish heart ıe out to her admirer, the love whi● ›o quickly transferred from one wom- nother could be worth my innocent 's acceptance. I lay down on my d tried to rest, but these conflicting ıs chased all slumber away from my

Yet there I remained until it was dress for dinner. I was determined, ər it cost me afterward, no traces of ss should be detected in me on that ›asion of meeting my proposed son- n the family circle. Not the slight- .bt was raised, during the whole of ng and terrible evening, as to the :y of my child marrying Lord Eu- nnerley.

from waiting to see if I should sec- e conditional acceptance May had o his proposals, I found that Lady had, on her own authority, installed the place of honor as her grand- future husband, and the whole house- ervants included, seemed perfectly nt of the engagement. May was next Lord *Eustace* at dinner; his *was referred to* at each fresh pro- posal that was made concerning her, and their future *ménage*, plans, and place of residence, discussed as freely as it was pos- sible.

Meanwhile, no one referred to *me!*

My own child did once or twice send a rapid glance in my direction, as much as to say, "What do you think, mothie?" but my mother and sisters-in-law seemed to leave me out of their calculations altogether. Now that the cares of the nursery and school-room were over, that the drudging was a thing of the past, and the result of my trouble completed, I had sunk down to the level I had always maintained in that household—the position of mother to the heiress! I sat still, seldom speaking, but listening with all my ears to the conversa- tion that was going on, and feeling not a little heart-sick and sore. Once Juliet turned to me, and asked if I had yet arrived at the important decision of what I was to wear upon the wedding-day.

"I was not aware of the necessity for decision," I answered gravely. "I was not even aware that the day was fixed."

"What! not for the thirtieth of July?"

"Certainly not! May has said nothing to me about it, and I naturally concluded she would have told her mother first!"

"But I didn't know it myself, darling," called out May from across the table, laugh- ing.

"Then, I don't see how it *can* be fixed. No one but you or I has the right to settle it, May."

"That is childish," said my mother-in- law, vigorously fanning herself to cover her annoyance; "and I am surprised to hear you raise so ridiculous an objection, Katha- rine. It cannot make any possible difference to you on which day the marriage is cele- brated; and as it takes place from this house, it is to be surmised that it may make some difference to me. However, Frances can fix her own day, if she likes it better, though she will hardly find a more suitable one."

"Dear grandmamma, the thirtieth will do excellently well," said May; "one day is all the same to me as another."

"So I should have imagined, my love,

but your mamma evidently is not of the same opinion."

"Oh, yes! she is. You don't mind, do you, dear mothie? You were only surprised because you had not heard the date before."

"I was only surprised, May—that was all."

"And for my own part I don't care if it's the thirtieth of this month, or next month, or next year! No more does Eustace! Do you, Eustace?" turning to him with one of her bright, bright smiles.

"Excuse me; I care very much, indeed. Next year would be extremely inconvenient to me," he answered, with a look of admiration.

"Ah! I dare say. Because you would have changed your mind by that time. You men are always chopping and changing. I wonder now whom you were swearing you cared for this time last year, eh?"

Lady Power and her daughters seemed to think this an excellent joke on the part of May, and the child joined heartily in the laugh which succeeded it. I could not laugh. I raised my eyes furtively and glanced at Lord Eustace. His were bent upon his dessert-plate, and there was a decided access of color to his cheek. He had not entirely forgotten, then! Some little memory of the past *had* still the power to disturb him.

I am not sure if at the moment I felt glad or sorry. I am sure that I feel very sorry now.

As soon as I had escaped from the dining-room I went to bed. There was no need to make any excuses for doing so, for Juliet considered that I had already exerted myself far too much during the day, and Lady Power was rather pleased than otherwise to get rid of my presence. She read my dislike to May's engagement and the idea of her hasty marriage, and considered, doubtless, that the wooing of my wild-bird would go on far better behind my back than before my face. My darling wanted to sit up in the bedroom with me, but this I would not allow. If she were to be dissuaded from a marriage with Lord Eustace Annerley, it *must be done by opening* her eyes to the *state of her own heart*, not by forcibly detaching her from the society of her lover. And I discerned, moreover (though this suspicion again might have arisen from my jealousy at the child taking an interest in any creature but myself), that, although she made that affectionate offer, she did so in filial tribute to my weakness, rather than because it would have given her the greater pleasure. So I dismissed her to the drawing-room again, only bidding her not forget to come and kiss me before she went to her own room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"THE THIRTIETH OF JULY."

When my daughter had left me alone, I took myself very severely to task for the feelings I had experienced that day. I tried to believe I was before my father confessor; and, laying my bosom bare of its most sacred thoughts, picked to pieces and analyzed as well as I was able each motive, and word, and action, for which I had made myself responsible. I did not come out of that close examination with flying colors. I tried to be faithful to myself, for I felt the importance of the cause I was trying, and the result was to leave my behavior in a very pitiable and sorry light. The form in which I catechized myself was somewhat after this searching fashion:

Question. Why do I shrink from the idea of Lord Eustace becoming my son-in-law?

Answer. I don't know.

But here my director in the shape of my conscience stepped in and said sternly:

"That is untrue. You *do* know!" and my spirit corrected itself in a hesitating voice, "*Because I love him still.*"

Q. Did he not urge you to become his wife yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you not refuse him of your own free will?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you not assure him again and again that nothing would make you alter your decision?

A. Yes!

Q. Whose fault is it, then, that he turned his attention to your daughter?

A. Mine.

Q. Did you not consider that Lord Eustace possessed every qualification to make a good husband for yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you had any reason to change your opinion?

A. No.

Q. Why, then, should he not make a good husband to May?

A. I don't know.

Q. What feeling makes you shrink from seeing his admiration of her?

A. Jealousy.

Q. For what reason did you refuse him?

A. For May's sake.

Q. For what reason cannot you accept him for May?

A. For my own,

"Your supposed maternal anxiety, then," said my conscience rudely, "is composed of jealousy of your child's superior attractions, and pique, that the man whom you deliberately rejected should find his consolation in her affection. You would wish to convince May that Lord Eustace doesn't love her, because he has ceased to care for yourself! You would grudge her entering upon a state of life which once appeared to you so desirable. You would like to persuade your heart that he is marrying your child for money, or other mercenary motives, so that you may lay the flattering unction to your soul that he has not forgotten you. In fine, you are laboring under the possession of the lowest and most ignoble feelings, and secretly calling them by the names of the highest virtues. You offered up your love for that man as a sacrifice on the altar of your conjugal and maternal fidelity; and now that Heaven, having greater faith in the sincerity of your solemn vow than it deserves, calls on you to prove the truth of your protestations by acting as a noble Christian woman and mother should act, you shrink backward and behave in a manner which would disgrace the weakest, most selfish, ungenerous girl in creation. I am *ashamed—I blush for you!*"

I was ashamed for myself. I hid my face in my hands and cried. This searching catechism had cleared the cobwebs off my brain. I saw my conduct in its true light, and felt once more that I had need of Hugh's forgiveness for my unfaithful thoughts of him.

I had deliberately and with wide-opened eyes thrust from me a certain good thing which Providence placed in my hand. What mattered it then to me *who* benefited by my loss? Or, rather, ought it not to matter very much to me, and because of thankfulness that the creature I loved best on earth should become the possessor of that which should have made me so happy to retain?

Might not Lord Eustace love my May the better because he had loved me first? Might he not become all the tenderer husband and father because he had been so nearly missing the possession of what *must* eventually prove far dearer to him than I could ever have proved?

The soreness of heart remained. A sense of the unnaturalness of the situation remained (I will not write down a lie, even on so delicate a matter), but I brought all these arguments and many more to bear upon the subject, and against myself, until I thought I was persuaded that all was for the best, and knew I was determined to make the best of it all.

For, indeed, through all my folly and lack of strength, and selfish desire for my own good, my child's welfare and happiness have ever been my first thought and consideration.

My May—my lovely, sunny-hearted May! I can thank God through my tears that you never quite belonged to anybody as you belonged to me—my own, *own* child!

When she came on tiptoe to my shaded bed that evening to bid me, sleeping or waking, a last good-night, I had an opportunity of putting my resolutions into force for the first time.

"I am wide awake, darling," I said, as her sweet lips touched my own. "I have been resting here and thinking."

"Thinking of pleasant things, I hope, dear mothie."

"Very pleasant, my precious child. I have been thinking of how much Lor

stace loves you. No one can mistake the look in his eyes as they rest upon you."

"Do you think so, dear? *Really?*"

The interest in her tone was evident.

"I am sure of it, May. And if I thought you loved him as much in return, I should be quite happy."

"Then be quite happy, darling; I *do* love him, only I'm not good at showing it. He followed me just now into the hall, and kissed me, and—and—"

"And what, my child?"

"I—I—didn't mind it, really I didn't. (I'm not joking, mothie.)"

"I hope you are not, my dear! And there is no reason you should. It would be a very sad prospect for your married life if you objected to kissing your future husband now."

"It's a great bore, marrying," said May, looking down with a sigh. "Why can't we all be happy and pleasant without it? I don't want to marry, mothie; I would much rather stay all my life with you."

"It would be impossible, my darling. I used to tell you so years ago. It is no use fretting about it."

"But I wanted to *live* with you, mothie, any way, and grandmamma says I can't."

"What business is it of hers?" I inquired quickly.

"Oh! none, of course; only, when I speak of your coming to live with Eustace and me at Castle Rivers, she always says it won't *do*, and all that sort of thing. Why shouldn't it *do*, mothie? You *will* live with me, won't you? How shall I get on without you? *How will you get on without me?*"

Her guessing questions almost choked me, but I constrained myself to answer them cheerfully.

"Why, you great baby! Do you really expect your mother to run after you all your life, picking up everything you drop, and ready to be appealed to on the smallest occasion? Husbands don't like that sort of thing, my May. They marry their wives *for themselves.* I shall see you very, very *often, I hope, and I shall go and visit you sometimes, and stay as long as ever you will let me.*"

"And that will be forever," interrupted May.

"But the plan of two families living together has often been tried, and seldom been found to succeed. Sooner or later it invariably leads to disagreeables."

"How *could* there be disagreeables between you and me, mothie?" she interrupted again.

"There will be your husband to consult, my darling, remember that!"

"Oh! I *won't* be married if it's to lead to all this bother!" cried the impetuous girl, as she jumped off the bed. "I love you *best of all the world*, mothie, and I won't be separated from you against my will—not for a single day—so there!"

Her tenderness brought the tears into my foolish eyes again. It was so delicious to hear her talk in that sweet, loving strain.

"My darling," I exclaimed, as I held her in my arms, "say those words again—only say you love me best of all the world—and that you will always love me so, and I am content—more than content!"

"*Of course I do,*" she cried, as she warmly returned my embrace; "a thousand times more than anybody I have ever seen, or ever shall see. I would rather die in your arms, my mothie, than live in those of anybody else!"

I took her words as the expression only of her warm, loving heart, and blessed her again and again for the comfort they offered me.

Ah, my God! I little dreamed how soon they would be realized.

. . . . . .

From that day I tried very hard, and I think I may say I succeeded pretty well, in treating Lord Eustace Annerley as I should have done any other gentleman who had been approved of by the family as the suitor of my daughter. I kept a strict guard over my own thoughts, words, and actions, and each night, before I went to bed, I made a self-examination of the past day, and laid a flower for each act of self-denial I could with sincerity place to my account on the shrine I had erected to my guardian angel. Thus I kept a calendar, as it were, of my in-

entions and their fulfillment, and, though ny shrine at times looked very bare, I suffered he humiliating sign to remain there, rather han place one blossom to my beloved one's nemory that I had not earned for him hrough my tears.

I had every intention to be faithful to ny trust. Providence in its watchful good- ness, did not design I should be too hardly ried; for Lord Eustace never reverted be- fore me by so much as a look to the buried past. On the contrary, he was so complete- ly master of himself, so quietly courteous when addressing me, so cheerful, amiable, and apparently oblivious that he had ever regarded me except as a probable mother- in-law, that it rendered my task, comparatively speaking, easy. And, added to this, he was so devoted to May, so ardent in his expressions of admiration, so lavish in his generous attentions; he seemed to grow so young and buoyant under the anticipation of his coming honors; and my child appeared so much to expand in womanliness and warmth of feeling under his courtship, that I should have been a worse woman than I am, had I not learned to rejoice with her and with him.

From that date the preparations for the wedding went on rapidly. Of course, I was consulted with regard to every detail of the trousseau, the ceremony, and the breakfast to be given on the occasion; and I tried to take an interest in it all for my May's sake. But my heart lay above such trifles, and beat more and more rapidly as the fatal day which was doomed to separate her from me drew near. I would not—I dared not—look be- yond that day.

Still my anxiety was that my artificial strength should not fail *before* it arrived.

What might happen afterward was of little moment by comparison.

My child was naturally interested in the various articles of her trousseau. A new wardrobe is always a cause of excitement to the young, who have not been taught by experience that happiness lies beyond such abject puerilities. For a few weeks my dar- ling was very eager and pleased with rush- ing about and ordering her new dresses and bonnets, which, in compliment to her own and Lord Eustace's country, were all to come from Dublin.

But, as the thirtieth drew nearer, I watched her spirits flag. She seemed to weary of the eternal discussions about col- ors and materials, and to become rather impatient of the demands made upon her time and her opinion.

She took to following me about the house, and leaving Lord Eustace and her grandmother and aunts for long hours to- gether, while she sat by my chair or sofa holding my hand in hers, and kissing it si- lently. Once I felt that she had wetted it with her tears.

"May, my darling," I exclaimed, intui- tively, "our parting will not be for long. Lord Eustace has promised not to keep you abroad for more than a month—we shall soon be together again."

"I know it," she answered, brokenly.

"And whatever happens, my beloved child," I went on, in a strong, cheerful voice (for I could be brave for her sake), "re- member that nothing—not even death—can separate you and me!"

"I know it, mothie," she repeated.

"And that this little trouble — which should really be a joy rather than a trouble to us—(we are wicked even to think of it as a trouble, dear May)," I added, wistfully.

"Very wicked, mothie!"

"That this little parting is sent us for our good—to show us how necessary we are to one another's happiness—how poorly we have thanked the Giver for His gift—how much better off we have been than others— is it not so, my sweetest?"

"O mothie, mothie!" cried May, in an- swer, as she fell upon my neck, "I wish that I were dead!"

There was nothing for me to do then but to soothe my own child with many en- dearments and caresses—to assure her that her low spirits were due to over-excitement and fatigue—and to bring the smiles I loved so much to see back to her dear face as soon as possible. Yet the words she had used were branded on my heart, and not to be erased, even by her smiles.

. . . . . .

The thirtieth of July dawned the w

picture of a summer's day. Every arrangement that had been made to confer honor on an occasion fraught with so much interest to two important families as my child's wedding was carried out without jar or failure.

All seemed to go like clockwork. Not one expected guest failed us. Not a cloud obscured the face of the clear blue sky. Not an incident occurred to cast a damp on the proceedings.

The day, the company, the attendant festivities, all seemed to have been made expressly to celebrate so auspicious an event. The Riversdale and Power families mustered in great force, and the most magnificent of costumes; the Claretowns were present to see their godchild happily disposed of, and the rest of the magic circle was composed of satellites not unworthy to revolve in so grand an orbit.

The bride looked beautiful, so everybody declared; and everybody had a better opportunity of judging than myself, who felt my only chance of keeping up during the ceremony was not to look at her at all.

The marriage (as my own had been) was obliged to be celebrated twice, first in the Protestant and then in the Catholic church. It was a long and trying ordeal, but my child went through it bravely, holding my hand tightly all the time. Then we returned to Gentian's Cross to breakfast, which brought palpably to my mind the breakfast that had been given there on the occasion of her christening, and at which the same long, twaddling speeches were made, that caused me to feel that the only way to sit through them was to fix my thoughts on something else, and not to listen to a word that was being said. But even that spun-out, magnificent, miserable wedding-breakfast came to an end at last, and then, for me, the most trying time of the day arrived. It had been easy to keep up before all those people, when to break down would have been to encounter sneers from my sisters-in-law, a remark from Lady Power *that "Katharine was always childish,"* or *petting from Juliet,* which would have *turned my tears into hysterics.*

"But when I had accompanied May to her room, and seen her arrayed in her traveling-suit, and everything was finished, and there was nothing more to wait for—

Then as my own child turned at the door to kiss me once more, and entreat me not to follow her down-stairs for both our sakes, and I strained my eyes to look at her sweet, pathetic face wet with tears, and knew that to see her thus it was *for the last time—*

Then, a sudden retrospective vision rushed at me; and I saw her in her helpless infancy, her chubby childhood, her budding youth, her early womanhood; all at once I saw, like a flash of lightning that reveals heaven for a moment, only to make the surrounding landscape blacker as it disappears, what my own child had been to me from the first moment of her existence, and I could have torn her from her husband's arms as a tigress tears its cub from the hand of the slayer!

The awful tragedy in which I was taking part froze my blood. The tears that had been ready to respond to hers rolled back upon my heart. I stood before her in dumb, speechless agony. She embraced me again and again, my peerless May, crying over me as I had never seen her cry before! And I held her in my arms, with a strong, nervous grasp, born of despair, and could not even utter the words of farewell. My tongue and my senses were paralyzed.

I know that she kissed me until she had been summoned more than once to go below. I know that to the last moment she tried to raise my spirits by repeated promises of a speedy return. I know that she came back several times to give me a last embrace. But that is all I know!

I stood where my own child left me in the centre of the room, motionless as if I had been turned to stone. I heard the confusion of laughter and talking in the hall below. I heard the door of the carriage, which was to convey her husband and herself to Dublin, slam. I heard the congratulations that followed them to the carriage windows, the last words and directions exchanged in the open air.

And then I heard the carriage drive away, and the sound of its wheels grow

fainter and more faint, as they rolled down the avenue and through the park gates.

Then—*I could hear them no longer!*

I put my hands to my head, and staggered to a seat! I felt my eyes, they were quite dry and hard. I looked curiously at my new attire, examined the ornaments I wore, the room in which I sat, the litter which May had left behind her; and tried hard to realize that my own child was my own child no longer.

But there was one fact which I knew, if I could not realize, that life, as far as this world was concerned, was over for me!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"A TIME OF WAITING."

Two days after the wedding Juliet took me back to London with her. It was the best change that could have been devised for me. Among her circle of acquaintance—in the midst of her merry group of young people, I had not the leisure to bemoan the loss of May that I should have had at Gentian's Cross, where every surrounding spoke to me of her. I was very unhappy, naturally, for many weeks afterward, but gradually I began to feel hopeful again, and to look forward with interest to my dear child's letters and the prospect they held out of reunion. Lord Eustace took her first to Italy, for which country she had always evinced a great affection, and to which she ardently desired to return. From Florence, and Rome and Genoa, her letters teemed with descriptions of the churches she had visited, the art galleries and museums she had explored, the lovely country by which she was surrounded, the sketches she had made for me of landscapes and figures. But after a while I began to think she was very reticent regarding her husband, and I told Juliet so. "You know I could hardly write when I was married," I remarked, "but had I had the opportunity for it, I believe my letters would have been composed of but one theme from beginning to end."

"*I have no doubt they would*," replied my sister-in-law, "but you mustn't expect every bride to be such a romantic little fool as you were, Katie. These children of the nineteenth century are much cleverer and more practical than their mothers. Fancy my Margaret refusing to marry a man with two thousand a year on the plea that she was not fitted to sustain 'Love in a cottage.'"

"She could not have loved him!" I replied.

"Of course she did not! The question is, who does love, or what the girls of the present day imagine love to be. If it comes to them accompanied by beauty, youth, and money combined, so much the better, but they will make no sacrifice to obtain the two first qualifications without the latter. To hear the rising female generation discuss ways and means is sickening. I do not believe nine-tenths of our daughters have the least comprehension what the four letters that build up that little but powerful word *love* mean."

"If they only knew what they lose," I replied.

"My dear, the worst of it is that they are pretty sure to know it when it is too late! I suppose there never was a period when money was held at greater value than it is now, and I suppose there never was a greater number of faithless wives than England holds at present. You have only to put the two facts together to draw the deduction our girls are reared to believe, that they cannot marry on a less income than they have been accustomed to enjoy; so the needy suitor is dismissed in favor of the man who can supply them with the dresses, horses, and jewelry that are necessary to their existence. And then, when they are married, the poor suitor (who is never too poor to be a lover) reappears on the *tapis*, and the usual result follows. My dear Katie, it is the end of half the married women."

"But they *must* be found out," I said, in amazement.

"Nonsense, my dear! they are very seldom found out; that is to say, the world sees it plainly enough, but the husbands are blind, or wink at it.

"I suppose there can be very few me

really such fools as not to see it, but they must be fools or worse. There's no alternative. I could point out a dozen married women to you at the present moment, if I chose, Katie, and be ungenerous, who not only permit their *liaisons* to be patent to the world, but speak openly of them among their intimate women friends. Talk of Paris! Paris can never have been worse than London is at the present moment!"

"O Juliet, you frighten me."

"You dear innocent Katie! Have you never heard it before? That comes of not living in town. My dear, in making a new acquaintance in this city, you have to walk as though you were treading upon eggs. Now, with regard to the women who leave their husbands for some other man, no one can defend them—no one wishes to do so, but at all events they are open in the wrong they do society. They are the renegades from the army of respectability. They say without disguise, 'We don't care for your social laws; we don't want your acquaintanceship; *this* is the only road which will make us happy, and we prefer to walk in it. Take us, or leave us, as you choose.'

"Such women are cut, and very justly so, by all people who desire to keep up a character for propriety, but they do their best to prevent the contamination spreading.

"They chalk the sign of the plague upon the lintels of their door-posts, and if you run in the way of infection it is of your own free will.

"But the women who excite my indignation are those who, professing to lead a life of virtuous respectability under the very eyes of their husbands, gratify their sordid desires of lust, or gain, or vanity (what purer motive can they have?), and become a mass of deceit, both at home and abroad. What right have such creatures to receive young girls into their houses and to visit at those of honest women, to seduce perhaps their husbands, brothers, or lovers, away from their allegiance! Katie! when I see such things, I think Tennyson never wrote truer lines than these:

'She, like a new disease unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightning of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends.'

"Oh!" went on Juliet enthusiastically, "if a woman loves but *one* man and sticks to him, she may be careless, unthinking, and disreputable, but while she is faithful she must have some good thing left in her; but for these new diseases that are turning London into a pest-house, I should like to see them killed; I should indeed."

I had never seen my sister-in-law so indignant. Her energy quite frightened me.

"Juliet," I said in a smothered voice, "you don't think, do you, that my—my *child* could ever come to be like one of those women?"

My earnestness made her laugh.

"My dear, dear Katie, I *must* have startled you to provoke such a question. How could you imagine such a thing, even for a moment. May, to forget all the good principles in which she has been reared—to forget her husband and her duty—to break all our hearts by such a course of conduct; my dear sister, you are raving!"

"But if she were unhappy?" I urged.

"How should she be unhappy with such a brilliant career before her? I consider May to be the most fortunate girl I know. By-the-way, did I tell you that Mrs. Nolan's sister met the Annerleys in Florence?"

"Oh, no! How did my darling look?"

"Lovely! (so Mrs. Nolan says), and very gay. I think her sister met May at some party or other. She said she wore pink, so it must have been at night."

"And Lord Eustace was with her, of course?"

"I conclude so, but they didn't mention him. I suppose he is too insignificant beside his bride. When did you hear from them last, Katie?"

"Yesterday; but May doesn't say anything about coming home, though the month is nearly out."

"You'd better take my advice, dear, and come with me and the children to Scarborough. They will not hurry back this weather, you may depend on it. And if Lord Eustace carries out his intention of standing for the county, it may be some time before he is able to give his wife such another holiday!"

"I suppose I shall have to go," I said with a sigh.

"What a complimentary sound! Yes, you silly, anxious old mother, you had much better leave your children to enjoy themselves, and think a little more of your own health. You are not half recovered yet, Katie. For my own part, I am glad you have the prospect of a few weeks' peace and quiet, before you begin running about all over the house after that big, tiresome child of yours again. I know, before another year is out, you will be established as chief housekeeper, lady's maid, and nurse, in one, at Castle Rivers. And you are not strong enough for the situation, Katie; really you are not!"

"If you only knew the pleasure it gives me to wait on her," I answered, with a happy smile at the picture she had conjured up.

"Oh! yes; that's all very well when it entails no suffering on yourself, but just now you are much better left to my tender mercies. And so you will go to Brighton with us like a good girl, and I promise to release you directly that piece of immaculate perfection of yours returns to Wicklow. It is a bargain—isn't it?"

I had no alternative, and so I went with her. I knew also that it was for my good, and I tried to be grateful; I did indeed.

. . . . . .

But as I had been doomed to disappointment respecting my child's return to me, on another occasion, so was I doomed now. The month at the seaside passed drearily enough, as I counted each hour to the time of my reunion with May, but the close of it found that reunion apparently no nearer than before.

My darling seemed as vexed as myself at the delay, still she was among new scenes and new people, and could not be expected to feel it so much as I did.

She wrote to me from Naples that she was surprised to find her husband had made arrangements to go on to Sicily—a country he had never visited. While in Sicily she fell ill. It was only a slight attack of fever, but I heard nothing of it till it was over, and I worried myself lest a worse thing might befall *my treasure*, and Lord Eustace *not consider it worth his* while to inform me.

"He ought to have telegraphed at once," I said, tearfully, to Juliet. "Fancy May being sick without me—"

"My dear child, it was nothing, or, depend upon it, the man would have written. You see what May says! She was not in bed half the time, and Lord Eustace thought it much better not to alarm you."

"But he shouldn't have thought," I replied, with a stamp of my foot. "It was his duty to tell me of it."

"Well, she's all right again now," said Juliet, consolingly. "So I wouldn't excite myself about it."

Yet the incident annoyed me more than I can express, and I detected myself looking out for the foreign post with feverish dread, lest I should hear of some fresh disaster befalling my May.

From Sicily, she informed me that Paris was to be their final destination.

"I wanted to go straight home," wrote my sweet girl complainingly. "I am so tired of sight-seeing, and I do so long to meet you again, dear mothie; but Eustace has some great friends in Paris who have persuaded him to pay them a visit. This has been an awful disappointment to me. I have not felt very strong since that attack of fever, and the traveling and dragging about does weary me so. Besides, I want to feel at home in Castle Rivers before Christmas comes, and above all things I want to see my own dear mammy again. Oh! darling, your girl is so mother-sick, I think sometimes that I shall never, never, *never* be able to part with you again."

"These letters of May's made me very happy and very miserable. I, too, was disappointed and chafing at the delay in our meeting—chafing still more perhaps at the knowledge that, if Lord Eustace had had any consideration for the tender attachment that existed between my child and myself, he would have yielded to her evident desire to join me and brought her home before.

Three—four—five—months dragged their miserable course one after the other, and all that time May and I had nothing but the few letters that passed between us to satisfy the cravings of our natural affection. But Juliet would not let me leave her. I suffered to

ribly, and she knew her company was the only solace that I possessed. Various discussions had been raised as to where I should live when May returned, but I put off my decision until I knew on which of his estates Lord Eustace meant to make his usual residence. At last December broke upon us, and my darling sent me a joyful scrawl from Paris, to say that they were about to start for Ireland on the next day but one, and hoped to find us at Castle Rivers to receive them.

How I made Parker scramble all my things into my boxes that I might start by the same evening mail and reach Wicklow before my treasure! How excited—how—joyful—how *mad* I was at the prospect of meeting her again!

"All's well that ends well," said dear Juliet, almost as pleased as myself to witness my pleasure. "You will soon forget all about these tedious months of waiting now, Katie! And I'm so glad you are to have her all to yourself for the first few days, before mamma and the Gention's Cross crew bear down upon you—"

"O Juliet, I am so excited," I replied; "I feel as if I must die before I reach Castle Rivers."

Even as I spoke the words, a letter from my angel was put into my hand.

It contained almost the same expression I had used.

"O mother, darling!" she wrote among other things, "I am so excited at the idea of seeing you again, I feel as if I should die before I reach your arms."

But she did not—thank God!—she did not!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"CASTLE RIVERS."

On the day following the receipt of May's letter announcing their return, I found myself at Castle Rivers.

Owing to my own state of health and *the short time that* elapsed between my *child's engagement* and marriage, I had not *had an opportunity* before of visiting this estate, the principal one among her husband's property. Now that I did see it, I was astonished at its size and imposing appearance. It was a far finer place than Gentian's Cross or Derry Lodge, although, from the limited income of its owner, it was not perhaps surrounded by so many signs of luxury as the Powers were enabled to bring about them. I could not help feeling rather proud, however, to think that the fine old house before me belonged to May, and pleased myself with imagining all the improvements she would be able to effect when she came into her fortune. I found Lord Riversdale and his daughter, Lady Selina Annerley, already installed at Castle Rivers in anticipation of spending Christmas with the bride and bridegroom, as well as Lord Eustace's two brothers, who were known only by the names of Jack and Sidney. I seemed a very small and insignificant personage in my own eyes among such grand people, but they were all very kind to me, especially the old earl, who appeared to be perfectly satisfied with his son's choice.

At last the long-wished-for moment arrived, and I held May in my arms again. We had received a telegram from Dublin to say they had reached there safely, and were coming on to Wicklow by a certain train. Of course the carriage went to the station to meet them. Lady Selina inquired courteously if I would not like to occupy a seat in it, in order to welcome my daughter the sooner, but I shrunk from the idea. I was too nervous; too anxious; I could not have met her before a crowd! But I slunk away from the drawing-room about the time that I knew the carriage must return, and ensconced myself in the library which opened on the hall. There I sat in the dusk of the wintry afternoon, straining my ears to catch the first sound of wheels coming up the drive. Once or twice I was disappointed. Carts and other vehicles seemed to be coming and going, making the frosty ground ring beneath the horses' feet, just for the pleasure of tantalizing me. But at last there was no doubt of it. At last I could hear the carriage with its easy, muffled sound roll smoothly over the park road and stop at the hall-door.

I heard the footmen in attendance throw open the portals, and let down the carriage steps. I heard a light step come hurriedly into the hall—I heard my darling's voice—I could wait no longer. I rushed out of my concealment with a cry of delight and caught her in my arms. I could only feel that she was a bundle of furs and velvet, but I knew that it was *she*, and that was sufficient for the satisfaction of my yearning heart. As for May, she gave one start as I came upon her—uttered one word, "*Mother!*" and then fell upon my neck in a burst of hysterical weeping. She cried so bitterly, and her agitation was so great, that I was compelled to lead her into the library I had vacated, and seat her on a chair.

"May! May! my beloved! my precious one!" I kept on repeating, as I knelt beside her. "There is nothing to cry for, dearest. Our separation is over. It is all joy and happiness in the future. You have come to your own home, and here is your mother to welcome you! Be comforted, my May, be calm! I cannot be happy till I see you so!"

We were still in this position when Lord Eustace came in, evidently looking for his wife.

"Is Lady Eustace here?" he inquired, as he looked round the gloomy apartment; then, recognizing our figures by the light thrown on them from the hall, he exclaimed: "O Mrs. Power! how are you? Delighted to see you again, I'm sure."

He shook hands with me hurriedly, and turned to his wife.

"Frances, my father and sister are in the drawing-room waiting to see you."

She rose at once, drying her eyes.

"Come, dear mother," she said, in a subdued voice, which still betrayed she had been weeping.

I followed them in silence to the presence of Lord Riversdale. The name by which Eustace addressed his wife had jarred, as it ever did, upon my ears. He who knew so well the history of my dealings with the Power family, why had he adopted this means of recalling them to me?

Lord Riversdale and his sons and daughter received my child with all possible cordiality, but I thought she responded rather wearily to their congratulations.

As she came into the full light my eyes sought her dear face greedily. It looked older and less bright, but perhaps that was only my foolish fancy. It was certainly very pale, but she had traveled a considerable distance that day, and must necessarily have been much fatigued. She made an early excuse for seeking her own room to prepare for dinner, and naturally I accompanied her there. But, when her maid had divested her of her many wrappings, and exchanged her heavy traveling-costume for a dressing-gown, I was shocked to see how thin she had become.

"My own darling!" I exclaimed, in horror, "what *has* happened to make you fall away like this? Why, May, you are a perfect skeleton! You must have been more ill than you have ever let me know."

"It's nothing, dear mother," she said, soothingly. "I have never regained flesh since I had that attack of fever in Italy. They wanted me to see a doctor in Paris, but I refused. I feel quite well, and I've grown nearly an inch since we parted. I shall be ready to be shown about in a caravan soon."

"I thought you looked taller, my darling, but your loss of flesh would make you appear so. Who was it wanted you to see a doctor in Paris?"

"Oh! Madame de Brillac and her crew."

"Were they kind? Did you like them, May?"

"No!" she answered shortly.

"But you enjoyed being in Paris?"

"I liked it as well as any other place. I could never enjoy any place or anything without *you*, mothie. The world seems very big and strange and empty to me when you are not there."

"My own! And so you are glad to come back to the old country and the old mother again, my bird, eh?"

"Oh! *so* glad, *so* glad!" she answered.

She had begun to cry again, and I did not wish the maid to witness her tears.

"You are overtired, my precious child," I said; "you must go to bed early to-night

my May, and you will be yourself again by the morning!"

"I won't go to bed; I shall be all right when I have had my dinner," she replied, with a spark of her old willfulness that delighted me. "Give me that black-velvet Jenner, it will do just as well as anything else."

I was very much excited and fluttered while I was dressing myself to appear at the same dinner, but I was not quite easy, nevertheless.

I had plenty of opportunity during its continuance of observing my child, unseen. She certainly looked older. Her features were sharpened; there was a slight depression in either of those cheeks erstwhile so round and blooming; and the wild, unchastened mirthfulness of her eyes had been replaced by a serious look, sadder but much more beautiful. Indeed, the entire change, though it woke a suspicion in my anxious heart that was very like pain, was an improvement rather than otherwise. It gave my darling's face the look it had ever wanted, something to solemnize and sanctify the earthliness of its beauty. It was the signal flag that we have accepted, the common lot; it was the sign that we have been compelled, whether with our will or against it, to call in the aid of Heaven to help us to combat against earth, it was—God help my child—the look of pain.

As I recognized it, my own heart sank, but seemed to be bound closer to hers than it had ever been. It was a bitter truth to accept, but it added a new tie to the old one, it made us sisters.

I could do nothing but gaze at my darling all that evening, and wonder how and why this new expression had come into her lovely face. But from the moment that I saw it, she stood in a higher light to me. She was no longer *only* a joy and delight, a pride and a blessing—she was a creature that I reverenced, a shrine at which I worshiped.

When I waked the next morning I could *not at* first imagine why I had such a heavy *feeling at my heart. In* a moment I had re*membered. It was the* new expression in *he face of my child.* Yet she came down to breakfast clad in a pale-blue cashmere robe, trimmed with swan's-down, and looking so exquisitely lovely and refined that, though some might have voted her delicate, few would have said she was ill.

Lord Eustace and I had been the first to meet in the breakfast-room that morning, and had some conversation respecting her.

"How is May?" I had inquired, anxiously, as he appeared.

"Quite well, thank you. I have not had an opportunity yet, Mrs. Power, of thanking you for taking the trouble to come here and meet us. The castle is but a dreary place in winter."

"Oh! how can you imagine I should have been content to stay away? You kept my darling from me such an unconscionable time. But I had hoped to see her looking stronger than she is, Lord Eustace."

"She is perfectly strong, I assure you."

"But she has grown very thin and pale!"

"She is thinner, I dare say! She is growing fast, you must remember, and the climate of Italy may have affected her a little. But she is anything but pale, usually."

"I am so glad to hear it. I was always foolishly anxious about her, as you know. She has been all I possess for so many years, now!"

"Yes, ah! exactly!" he said indifferently, as he turned away. "Well, Selina," he continued, addressing his sister, who just then entered the room, "now you've come, I suppose we may begin breakfast!"

"Won't you wait for your wife, Eustace?"

"Not a bit of it. She's the most unpunctual creature in creation. Where will you sit, Mrs. Power? What may I give you?" he went on, as he uncovered the various dishes with which the table was spread.

We had got half-way through the meal before my darling appeared. I watched her entrance keenly. She went the round of the table, shaking hands with all present, and when she came to my chair she bent over it and kissed me as warmly as if she had been a little child again. But she never even glanced at her husband. She even took the

hair he pushed toward her without looking at him, though she bent her head in acknowledgment of his courtesy as she would have done to any stranger.

I thought of the undisciplined, rapturous, boidenish manner in which I had been used to rush into my boyish husband's arms at whatever time of the day I met him, and sighed. But then I had been a very rude, uninformed girl at the time of my marriage, and without the slightest knowledge of the usages of society. And May was nearly two years older than I had been, and had been married much longer—perhaps that caused the difference. Still I should have liked to see a look—if it had only been *one* look—of mutual love and understanding pass between them. But he continued steadily to attack boiled chicken and ham, and curry and rice, and everything else he fancied on the table; while she played with her knife and fork, and talked to her father-in-law, and shot sweet, bright, loving glances in my direction, that promised a world of pleasure as soon as breakfast should be concluded.

"Have you nothing to tell me about your tour, my darling?" I said some hours afterward, when we had for the time exhausted our stock of mutual congratulation and delight at being together again, and were sitting cozily beside the fire.

"Nothing but what you know, dear mothie. It was all very beautiful—Italy especially—but I don't think we saw anything new. I recognized all the old scenes you and I took such delight in last year." And my daughter sighed.

"Paris, at all events, was new to you, May?"

"Yes," she answered shortly.

"You do not seem to have enjoyed your stay in Paris, my darling!"

"Mothie dear! don't ask me. I liked the city well enough, but I hated the people. Oh! how I detested Madame de Brillac, no words can say."

"But why did you stay so long with her, then?"

"Lord Eustace wished it to be so; of course I had no alternative. You and your paragon *don't seem to* hit it off so well as *you used to do, mothie*," she added, after a pause, as she looked up searchingly into my face. The tone pained me. I had suspected all was not so happy between May and her husband as I had hoped it would be. Now I was sure of it.

"I wish you would not mention Lord Eustace in those terms, my darling child. They do not sound becoming from his wife's lips."

She gave a slight shrug of impatience.

"How shall I call him? By what names did you designate your Hugh, mothie? I suppose all husbands are the same delightful creatures."

"I could never find a name good enough by which to call your father, my own child."

"Ah! he was a *rara avis*. And Lord Eustace is *not*. At least in my opinion."

"May, be careful!" I said, imploringly.

"Well, mothie, what would you have? Here I am, the wife of a lord, with plenty of houses and money—and a large fortune, and a coronet in prospect—having made what grandmamma calls 'the best match of the season.' Having accomplished my duty so far in the station of life in which it has pleased God to call me" (as the Protestants say), "I may surely be allowed the small privilege of speaking of my husband as I like!"

"You are as flippant as ever, my child."

"Am I, mother, am I? Oh! I wish I were," she went on impetuously as she sank sobbing at my feet.

"May, May! my own darling! what is this?"

"O mother! why did they ever let me marry him?" she gasped in her emotion. "Why did grandmamma go on urging me to the step? why did my aunts say it was a wonderful stroke of good fortune—why—why—was I so blind as not to see what he was for myself and to mind my own feelings as you begged me to do?"

She was crying as if her heart would break, and I was too horror-struck to do more than support and soothe her.

"My own, own child!" I cried.

I felt that I ought to stop her confession; but she was so young, and it seemed so hard she should not confide in her mother.

"I cannot love him. I cannot love"

she went on hysterically. "O mothie, mothie! what shall I do?"

What should she do? What should *I* do?

My anguish at her question was too great for words. I was half choked with my emotion.

At last, by a violent effort, I controlled myself sufficiently to reason with her. She might have commenced her married life unhappily; she had been so much spoiled and petted at home that she might have found it difficult at first to submit to discipline and coercion; there was a great difference between her husband's age and hers, and he might have misunderstood the caprice and vagaries of such a child. But it was impossible—it must be impossible—that May's married life was not to prove a happy one.

Oh! my child! my own child! was it for *this* that I had sacrificed myself?

Such were the bitter thoughts that coursed through my mind as I fondled the dear head bent upon my knee, and kissed the golden curls that crowned it.

"May, my darling," I commenced as soon as I could command my voice, "I do not wish to check your confidence in me, but I cannot let you speak so of your husband—I was afraid—I was terribly afraid—at the time of your marriage that you did not love him as warmly as you should have done. I tried very hard to make my meaning clear to you. I spoke openly of it to your grandmother and Lord Eustace, but no one would listen to me. Then all I could do was to hope and pray. And I have prayed, my child, through all these weary months of separation, very fervently that your happiness might be secured to you, and I cannot but believe that my prayers will be answered. Complete content is not always attained at the outset of married life, May; for most husbands and wives have much to learn concerning each other's dispositions and temperaments, before things go smoothly. But if you will be patient, my darling, and submissive, it is sure to come in time. Lord Eustace cannot fail to appreciate an attempt *to do your duty.* I should have thought I *might say more of him* than this," I added *with a sigh, "I imagined* he was so much in *ove with you!"*

She had been hiding her dear face on my breast, but at these words she raised it, flushed and tear-stained, but indignant.

"*In love!*" she repeated with an emphatic scorn that was more suitable to seventy than seventeen — "in love!" Yes; that is just what Lord Eustace was with me. But, mother, dear, *that* sort of love lasts just as long as it suits the lover, and no longer."

"And you can say this after six months' marriage?" I exclaimed.

"Six months! Why, he was making love to another woman before we had been married *two.*"

"May, you *must* be mistaken! You have permitted jealousy to lead your better judgment astray."

"I have never been jealous of him, mother; but I *have* been jealous of my position. And I was not mistaken. Everybody knew it! Even my servants (if you condescended to question them) would tell you that it was the common talk."

I sat, listening to her revelations, dumfounded. Here was a phase of married life for which my experience had totally unprepared me. And to think that he—*he*—could have treated my child thus! Oh! how my blood boiled with indignation.

"You were surprised to hear I didn't care for Paris," May went on, after a pause —she had ceased crying now, though her face bore traces of her tears. "*How* could I care for it? Eustace was always away with his friends—taking Madame de Brillac to the play or opera, or dining with her in the Bois, while *I* was left to the company of her sisters. And then, to crown all, when I complained of his neglect of me, he had the assurance to tell me to my face that there had been some very tender relations between Madame de Brillac and himself in days gone by, and the least he could do, under the present embarrassing circumstances, was to show her that he still valued her friendship."

"Lord Eustace told you this himself?" I gasped.

"Of course he did, mother; and with all the effrontery of an Irishman. That was the reason we returned home so suddenly. I believe he would have remained there till

loomsday else, he found Madame de Brilac's *friendship* so delightful. But I insisted upon leaving the house. I said I should leave him else. And so he consented to come back for Christmas to Castle Rivers."

"O May! May! May!"

"Don't cry, dear darling! You've got me back again, you see, at last—all to yourself—and I don't know whether it is not best so, after all. I should not have cared for any man to come between you and me, mother."

"And I loved him so!" I blurted out in my distress; but, fortunately for both of us, May did not notice the warmth of the expression.

"I know you did—your paragon!—as I used to call him. You thought him perfection, didn't you, mother? Well, it can't be helped; we've both been deceived, and we must make the best of a bad job. But, if it were not for *you*," cried my child, as she fell into my arms again, "I don't know how I should bear it. But you will *never*, *never* leave me, mother, will you?"

"*Never! never!*" I reiterated firmly, as I clasped her to my bosom, and neither of us appeared to remember that the fulfillment of that promise must depend upon the consent of another.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"YOU WILL SEPARATE US?"

It was at this juncture Lord Eustace came in and interrupted us. He did not look pleased at witnessing our close embrace, still less at the traces of tears on his young wife's cheek.

"Are you not well?" he inquired curtly.

"Quite well, thank you," she answered, in the same tone, "and quite comfortable."

"Had you not better sit on a chair?"

"I prefer my mother's knees."

"My sister is just going out in the carriage. She expected you to drive with her."

"'Blessed are they who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed,'" said May lightly.

"*Had you not better* go with Lady Selina, May?" I suggested; "the fresh air will do you good this bright afternoon."

"Will you come, too, mother?"

"If you wish it, dear, and there's room in the carriage."

"There's plenty of room. Come along, then; for I sha'n't go without you," cried willful May, as, without further reference to her husband, she pulled me out of the room.

Apparently there was no fear mixed with her dislike of him. The thought was a consolation to me. My child had not that extra pain added to her troubles.

But how came it that a determined man like Lord Eustace permitted a child—and his wife—to treat him so cavalierly? The only solution I could find to this question was, that, notwithstanding her youth and her position, he stood in awe of what he had—(probably in a moment of irritation)—put in her power to say against him.

But, oh! how much more my poor child seemed to want my love and protection and sympathy now than she had done since her helpless infancy? My heart echoed the promise she had exacted from me, and I felt that I must never, never leave her! At least I felt so until a few days afterward.

About that time there happened to arise a discussion at the breakfast-table relating to Lord and Lady Eustace visiting Gentian's Cross. Lady Power had written to decline coming to Castle Rivers, on account of the inclement season, and to beg that, as soon as their guests had departed, she might have the pleasure of receiving them at her house instead, which under the circumstances appeared the most natural thing for her to desire and for them to do.

Lord Riversdale and his daughter had already fixed the date of their return to Dublin, and there was no obstacle therefore to the young people leaving Castle Rivers when they chose.

"And *you*, Mrs. Power?" inquired Lord Eustace of me.

I hesitated. I had fully intended to go to Gentian's Cross with them.

"Oh! mothie's coming with us. Ar'n't you, darling!" said May.

"I thought of it, May. I know Lady Power is always glad to see me."

"Of course she is. And what else could you do? You didn't think we were going to leave you behind, all by yourself—did you?"

"That would hardly have been polite," interposed her husband courteously but coldly, "and necessarily I never contemplated such a proceeding. But I thought Mrs. Power might have business at her own home?"

"Have you fixed on a place of residence yet?" inquired Lord Riversdale.

Now, though I had told May, and fully believed that a double household never succeeds in the long-run, I must confess that I had had a secret hankering to make the experiment with my daughter and son-in-law, which desire on my part had been fostered by what May had told me of the assurances Lord Eustace gave her before their marriage that she should never be separated from me. For this reason I had delayed to choose a place of residence. I did not expect and did not wish to take up my abode entirely with my children, and I had dreamed of renting a small house possibly in Dublin, or London, to which I could retreat when they went visiting, or their house was full, but still I hoped to pass the majority of my time in the presence of my beloved daughter. Now—something in Lord Eustace's tone, or the confidences I had received from May, made me feel shy of communicating my half-formed plans to them.

"I have not!" I said in answer to the old earl's question. "It is a difficult matter to decide."

"What are you talking of?" cried May authoritatively. "The decision has been made ages ago. Mother's going to live with us. Eustace always said so before we were married."

"Oh! indeed," said her father-in-law, and reapplied himself to his breakfast.

Lord Eustace said nothing, and I felt awkward and confused.

"That was all nonsense, darling," I said to May, lightly. "I shall have a snug little cottage to myself before long, and a room in it perhaps for Eustace and you."

"*You will have no such thing,*" replied *my child. "I'll pull it down about your ears if you attempt anything of the sort.* Now, don't be silly, mother. You know very well that I couldn't live without you, and if you go away from Castle Rivers, I shall go too."

"Silly girl!" I said, laughing.

But still Lord Eustace said nothing in furtherance of his wife's wishes, but stood before the fire picking his teeth, and regarding us fixedly.

"If you're done joking, Frances!" he interposed after a while, "perhaps you'll fix on what day we will go to Gentian's Cross."

"I don't care. When shall we go, mothie?"

"It is for you to decide," said her husband, firmly. Still she turned to me.

"Will the twentieth suit you, darling?"

"Of course, of course," I said hurriedly in an undertone, wishing to prevent anything unpleasant. "Don't ask me, May!"

"I *shall* ask you," replied the imperious child in a loud voice. "You're the first person to be considered. We'll go on the twentieth, Eustace, as it will suit mother," she continued.

"Perhaps it will not suit me!" he answered.

"Very well, then, we *won't* go. It's very easily decided. Will you ride this morning, Selina?"

"With pleasure," said Lady Selina Annerley.

"You cannot have your horses," remarked her brother, with a frown.

"Why not?" inquired May.

"Because I've sent them out."

"Then we'll have others."

"There are no others."

"Where are the brown and the bay?"

"They are not at your disposal!"

"But where are they?"

"That is my business!"

"Well, never mind! I dare say we can do without them," replied May, as we rose from the table.

But she knew, and I knew, and every one present knew, that her husband had a design to thwart her by his refusal. She did not mention the subject to me as we went up-stairs together, and I respected her reticence by silence. However much I

valued my dear child's confidence, and prayed it might never be withdrawn from me, I still felt that to permit her to speak her whole mind concerning Lord Eustace's conduct was neither wholesome for May nor honorable in myself. I could not refuse to listen when she came with her young heart bursting with disappointment to my arms, or that might have had a more dangerous effect than the other; but I would not encourage her to speak of the scene that had just passed. So we parted with a kiss at our respective bedroom-doors that morning —I, to secure my usual quiet hour for reading; she, as I supposed, to hold a conference with the housekeeper.

I had not been engaged upon my book for more than half an hour perhaps, when I heard the sound of horses' feet upon the gravel outside my window, and, thinking that a visitor had arrived, I rose to ascertain who it was. What was my surprise, however, to see May, dressed in a dark-blue-cloth habit and mounted on a tall black horse, galloping as hard as she could down the Castle drive, followed by a groom riding a small chestnut mare! I concluded she had coaxed Lord Eustace into letting her ride after all, but thought it strange she should not have looked into my door as she passed down-stairs, to tell me her intention. I watched her as she passed out of sight, with proud and loving eyes. She sat her horse so well, her pliant figure swayed with each movement of the animal, and her golden braids of hair coiled tightly round her head, glistening as they caught the rays of the morning sun. I was still gazing at the point where she had disappeared, and thanking God for her youth and strength and beauty, when a tap sounded on my bedroom-door. I gave permission to enter, and Lady Selina Annerley appeared. Her face looked unusually pale, and I could see at once that she was trembling.

"O Mrs. Power," she exclaimed, "there is such a dreadful fuss going on down-stairs, and I am so frightened!"

"My dear! what is the matter?"

"May!" she ejaculated.

"She *has just gone* out on horseback. *have been watching* her ride down the drive, and wondering you were not with her!"

"But Eustace is so very angry. You heard him forbid her riding at breakfast, and she went and ordered that horse to be saddled for herself in defiance of his orders. And it's such a dangerous horse, Mrs. Power. Eustace says no woman can ride it with safety; she'll be thrown to a certainty, and he has discharged the groom that saddled it, and he is swearing so dreadfully about the whole business; and, oh! Mrs. Power, if you could speak to him?"

"Stop!" I said feebly; "stop!"

I had only heard that one word, "*dangerous!*"

"Is the horse *really* not safe?" I asked with trembling lips; "or does your brother say so because he is angry?"

"No, really, Mrs. Power, it is an awful animal even for men to mount, and the groom says he told Lady Eustace so himself. But she was determined to ride him. She threatened the man with dismissal if he did not saddle him. And now Eustace has dismissed the poor fellow."

"Oh! never mind the man. Think of my child," I cried excitedly. "What are they doing? What have they done? Has Lord Eustace followed her?"

"No! he is in the dining-room."

"Let me go to him," I exclaimed, pushing past Lady Selina. I ran down to the apartment we had just left. I ran up to Eustace Annerley as though no coolness had ever arisen between us. I could think of nothing but what might happen to my child.

"Eustace! Eustace!" I burst forth in my agony, "for God's sake, tell me, is there any danger?"

He was alone, and standing quietly on the hearthrug, though the traces of anger were still visible on his flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. He turned and regarded me steadfastly.

"Danger in what?" he demanded.

"To my darling!—with this dreadful horse? Lady Selina says she will be thrown! You do not think it possible?"

"I do think it possible—more than possible, probable! Frances has chosen to

in direct defiance of my wishes, and the consequences must rest on her own head!"

"But surely you will follow and warn her!"

"I really don't see the use of it. In the first place, I don't know which road she has taken; in the second, it is very unlikely she would listen to me if I did meet her! A wife who is openly disobedient is not likely to be secretly persuaded—"

"But she did not know; she *could* not have known," I continued in the utmost distress, "that her disobedience was attended by so much danger. O Lord Eustace, she is such a child—such a willful, spoiled child! Have pity on her and on me, and take means to prevent any accident happening to her!"

"What do you wish me to do?" he said unconcernedly.

"Take another horse, and follow her!"

"The worst advice you could give. The sight of me would probably induce her to accelerate her speed and bring about the very catastrophe you dread. The animal she is riding will not bear the presence of other horses. If she meets any riders on the road, or her groom follows her too closely, I wouldn't give twopence for her chance of reaching home with all her bones unbroken. He'll bolt with her across-country as sure as a bird!"

"O my God! my God! what shall I do?" I screamed—"what shall I do to save her?" I believe I had some thoughts of rushing out into the open air just as I was, but Lord Eustace laid his hand upon my arm and forced me into a seat.

"It is a painful position for both of us, Mrs. Power," he said, "but the only thing we can do is to wait patiently for the result. You must remember that Frances has brought this entirely on herself!"

"What comfort will that be to me," I cried despairingly, "if I receive her back with broken limbs—or worse? O Lord Eustace! I know she has been willful and disobedient. I can see you are neither of you so happy in your marriage as you ought to be—but if you ever cared for me—if you ever loved me even a little"—I went on, hardly knowing what I said—"have pity on me now!"

"*If I ever cared for you—even a little*," he repeated deliberately. "You *know* I cared for you—you know too how you requited my care!"

"Then, why cannot you make my child happy?" I sobbed. "You see what she is to me—all the world—all the world. And yet you can break her heart and mine—God knows why?"

"*God knows why!*" he again repeated. "And so should you."

"I?" I exclaimed, lifting my tearful face to his in my astonishment. "*I?*"

"Yes! *you*. You, the woman who played fast and loose with me for your own amusement! who engaged my attentions until I had every reason to believe you would requite them, and then cast me off like an old glove that fitted your purpose no longer; confessed unblushingly that you had only been trifling with my feelings, and threw me back upon myself—the world and my evil passions—for comfort and relief. You, who without cause treated me thus, should best know why your daughter's heart is in danger of being broken, for it was you—and you alone—who rendered mine callous and indifferent."

The injustice of his taunts made me forget everything but themselves. I longed to tell him all: to entreat him, for the sake of the bitter sacrifice I had made, to love and cherish my child. But I could not, I dared not. The time was over for such a revelation. My *friend* might have heard it. It was impossible I could tell it to my *son-in-law*.

So I sat there before him, cowering like a convicted criminal, although I knew that my conscience was free from all offense, except the crime of loving the creature God had committed to my care, too well for my own happiness.

"Don't speak of that now," I said, imploringly; "it is most unbecoming our present position toward each other, and it is all past and done with."

"So you imagine—your wish, perhaps, being father to your thought—that is, if you ever take the trouble to bestow a thought

upon me. But let me tell you, Mrs. Power, that it is *not* past and done with, and that, as far as I am concerned, it never will be. Oh, don't look shocked! I am not going to pollute your maternal ears by any allusion to the feelings I once entertained for you. I am not even prepared to state that a vestige of them remains—*but I have not forgotten!* And did it never strike you that the reason I passed by all the belles of the season to fix my choice upon an unformed girl like your daughter was not so much to please myself as to displease you?"

"Not to please yourself!" I ejaculated, "when you were in love with her?"

"Bah! About as must in love with her as you were with me. Do you suppose that the man who had selected *you* for his wife one season could so utterly change his opinions as to prefer your school-girl the next? Do I look as if I had a taste for unripe fruit? But you are feigning ignorance to me as you once feigned interest."

"Lord Eustace, you are doing me a great injustice," I said, warmly; "I am not feigning. I am entirely in earnest when I say that, if you did not marry my poor child for love, I have no conception why you married her at all—considering that I cannot do you the wrong to suppose you chose her for her money."

"Not entirely," he answered, coolly; "although, without the prospective dowry, I scarcely think Miss Power would ever have been transformed into Lady Eustace Annerley. But I had a higher motive for marrying her than that—higher, that is to say, in my own ideas. There is a very strong feeling of revenge in my nature, Mrs. Power, and I had a very strong reason to excite it. You had disappointed me. I determined to disappoint you, and I knew—"

"You knew no more deadly weapon could be placed in your cruel hand than the welfare of my child; and so you grasped it—and so you use it! O Eustace Annerley, can you be a *man* to plan and carry out so base and cowardly a revenge as this?"

"I believe I am. At all events, there was a *time when your love* might have made *me so.*"

"You must not—you shall not—speak to me of that time now!"

"Very good; then we will confine ourselves entirely to the present. And my present determination is that my wife and your daughter shall submit herself to the yoke she has voluntarily adopted, and that without any of the drawbacks arising from undue confidence and sympathy in her disobedience."

"You mean that you will separate us?" I exclaimed.

"If Frances will not show me at least outward respect and obedience while you are present—yes."

"O my God!" I said, below my breath.

"I am not at all sure it will not be the best thing for her," he went on, with perfect self-command; "for you have spoiled her, and encouraged her willfulness to that degree that she is becoming simply unbearable. And so long as you foster the old feeling of self-assertion by your presence, I am afraid there is very little chance of her ever changing her course of conduct. Which would be extremely unpleasant to me, and result in something more than unpleasant to herself!"

"You do not wish me to live at Castle Rivers?" I said, interrogatively.

I awaited his answer as if it had been my death-blow; but I felt I must know the worst at once.

"I should never be so rude, I hope, as to turn any lady out of my own house, but, if you ask my candid opinion, I say, decidedly, it would be advisable you should have your separate place of residence."

"Lord Eustace, you need say no more. It is impossible to mistake your meaning; and you knew when you expressed it that my pride would prevent my even expostulating with you on the subject."

"You save me a very unpleasant task by your ready acquiescence, Mrs. Power, and I thank you for your courtesy."

The calm, gentlemanly tone was so far harder to bear at that moment than any amount of anger would have been, that it cut into my heart like a knife.

"Oh! you have your revenge, indeed

I exclaimed, brokenly, as my head sunk down upon my outstretched arms.

"I hope you will not look on it entirely in that light," he went on with the same provoking calmness; "although I have had occasion to make use of the word 'revenge' in our conversation, it has an ugly sound, and is seldom mentioned in polite society. It is better to call our difference of opinion by some other name, or, better still, not to mention it at all. Nothing can be more natural than (your daughter being married) you should require a house of your own. The fact of your residing at Castle Rivers would be far more likely to excite comment."

"But you will not *quite* separate us!" I said, imploringly. He had insulted me—this man—on my tenderest point. I saw him now in his true colors—as malicious, designing, and revengeful—yet I stooped to plead with him for *her* sake—the sake of my own child.

"Pray, don't think so badly of me. I have no wish or intention of the kind—you will visit us, I trust, as often as may be convenient to yourself or usual for ladies standing in the same relationship to do. But I must request—more than that, *demand*—that, during the time I have the honor to receive you under my roof, you are careful not to influence my wife to rebel against my just authority."

"I never have," I said, indignantly.

"Perhaps not, in so many words, but she evidently accepts your caresses and expressions of sympathy as encouragement in her disobedience, which indeed they would appear to be to any one."

I felt I could continue the conversation no longer. I was trembling under the indignities he had offered me.

"Lord Eustace," I said, rising, "I have but one request to make of you. May imagines I am going to live with her. She says it was a promise of yours before your marriage—" ("A total mistake," he said, *en parenthèse*)—"Let her imagine that it is my own wish to have a separate establishment. *Let me break to her the news that it is to be so. Do not let her imagine her husband ned her mother from his doors.*"

"You take altogether too romantic and high-flown a view of the case," he replied; "but I can have no objection to your carrying out your own desire with regard to telling her the news—only—be good enough to make her thoroughly understand it will be of no use appealing to me in the matter."

I did not attempt to argue with him further. My self-pride and dignity had already been too deeply wounded by the communication.

I turned from the spot where I had been sitting, and, dizzy with surprise, consternation, and grief, I staggered from the room.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"MY OWN ANGELS."

No catastrophe happened to my child that day. She came back from her perilous ride safe and well, although I heard afterward, through Parker, that the groom in attendance had more than once been in terror for the consequences of her rashness. I was sitting in my bedroom—half stunned with the fears I entertained for her safety and the intelligence I had received—when she returned. I ascertained that it was indeed she, and uninjured, and then I sat down quietly until she should come to me. I dared not go down to her. I was afraid of myself in the first instance. I was afraid of the influence my appearance might have on my son-in-law in the second. I thought it would be wiser to let the husband and wife meet without spectators—hoping that Lord Eustace, in his desire to annoy me, might have miscalculated the amount of his affection for my darling, and that when he saw her return in safety, mercifully preserved from accident by an all-protecting Providence, his natural affection might find its vent in gratitude rather than reproaches.

But I gave him credit for more generosity than he possessed. He did not even close the dining-room doors upon their conference before his voice was to be heard, raised loudly in reproach of her misdoings, and hers mingled with it in saucy recrimina-

sion. What passed between them I cannot tell; but I know I had been kept a long time in suspense before May, flushed and excited with the interview, came in at my bedroom-door.

"O my darling," I exclaimed, as I rushed forward to meet her, "what a terrible fright you have given me!"

"Have I, dear mothie? I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to do it. But why were you alarmed?"

"Because your husband told me the horse you rode was a very dangerous animal, and might throw you—or run away."

"What nonsense! Eustace is always croaking about something. 'The Black Prince' was a little 'gay,' I allow—but if he didn't wish me to ride him he should have chosen one for me himself. Does he suppose I am to be ordered about like a child?"

"But, my dear, you should not have gone out riding at all. You know you did it out of perversity."

"O mother, darling, he has been *going on so* at me down-stairs! Don't you begin to scold me too, for I can't bear it."

I heard the sound of the tears in her voice, and, looking up, saw the sweet gray-blue eyes over-brimming like wood-violets wet with dew.

I could not say another word. My own heart was too deeply charged with grief and disappointment.

I drew Hugh's child closely into my embrace, and we cried upon each other's bosom.

. . . . . .

But there was still the news to be broken to May, that I was about to have a separate establishment from hers—and I set about it as quickly as I might, lest Lord Eustace should forget his promise and prevent me. I had learned to distrust his every word—I broached the subject that very afternoon.

"It is on the twentieth you go to Gen-ian's Cross, May, is it not?" I asked quietly. We were sitting together and alone before the drawing-room fire.

"Yes, dear."

"And this is the tenth. I think I shall start *somewhat before* you. I have a little *business to transact in Dublin.*"

"What business, mothie?"

"I have a fancy for finding a little cottage for myself where I can stow all my knick-knacks and rubbish, you know, and install Parker as prime-minister."

"There is plenty of room for your 'rubbish,' as you call it, here."

"I know there is, my darling, but it would not be quite the same thing. I cannot knock Lord Eustace's walls to pieces, and put up my own gimcrack contrivances and inventions. You know what a fidget I was of old, and how much I value my little collection of curiosities."

"But you will never see them in Dublin, mother."

"Oh! yes, I shall, my May. There will be many opportunities—when I am not well, you know, and require change—or you visit Dublin—or the castle is full—when I shall be glad to have a little place of my own to go to. There is a great charm in independence, you know, my child—in feeling that you have a sanctum that belongs entirely to yourself!"

"But, mother, dear, if you begin by adoring and admiring your sanctum to this degree, you may end by wishing to live in it altogether."

The time had come to speak to her.

"Well, my own child," I said wistfully, "and suppose I did? I think it would be better, after all, if I had a home of my own."

"O mothie, you're not in earnest," she said, with genuine alarm. "You *promised* you would live with us. You said you would *never* leave me again. Oh! don't go, pray, *pray*, don't go. What shall I do if you leave me all alone?"

"May, dearest, don't make my task so hard," I said, entreatingly. "It is best, darling—really it is best—that I should not remain permanently at Castle Rivers."

"Has *he* said so?" she demanded in an altered tone. I glanced up at her quickly; her eyes were dry, but her cheeks had suddenly burned into a bright scarlet, and her breast was heaving visibly.

"Lord Eustace and I have had some conversation on the subject," I said, trying to speak cheerfully, "and he agrees with me

and it has always been *my* opinion, May, that —there is more chance of happiness when families live (as was originally intended) each on their own homestead than in one circle."

"*Liar!* *How I hate him!*" said May, in a low voice of determination.

"My darling, you *mustn't* say that!" I entreated.

"I won't say it, if it hurts *you*, mother —but I mean it—*I mean it!*"

These were pleasant truths for me to hear from the lips of the child for whose earthly happiness I had so miserably catered.

. . . . . .

My story is drawing so rapidly to a close that I feel with each word I write I must hurry on to the end. I can no longer dwell with pleasure on the details of my narrative. The sooner it is completed the better.

I took the little house in Dublin, and furnished it according to my fancy. I spent as much time upon its decoration as I possibly could, and when it was furnished it was as perfect as such a tiny nest could be. The walls were covered with the pictures, china, and ornaments I had collected from the various countries I had visited; and fanciful carvings, old-fashioned furniture, well-selected coins and hot-house flowers, combined to render the little cottage quite a show-place in Dublin. Visitors came again and again to admire the style of its decoration, to wonder why it was my rooms looked so different from theirs, and to declare it was the most perfect home for a single lady that could possibly be devised.

And then, my work accomplished, I sat down in the "perfect home," with nothing to do day by day but to think of my own wants and my own desires, and feel that, with all its snugness and beauty, a howling wilderness would have suited my thoughts as well. What mattered it to me, who had no longer my child's face to look upon, that I was surrounded by smiling landscapes and painted cherubs? What music could be conveyed by the touch of instruments, or the shrill note of birds, to the heart that was *pining for the sound of her* voice?

What taste in the dishes to which I sat *lown by myself?* What rest on the couch I nightly pressed alone, and without even the promise of meeting my darling when the morning broke? Oh! I was utterly and entirely desolate; more desolate, I think, at that period than I have ever been since, for then all was uncertainty and suspense; now, it is over. *I know the worst that can befall me.*

I was not without offers of assistance to help me tide over the first senses of desolation in my new venture. Lady Power invited me to spend as much time as I chose at Gentian's Cross, and Juliet entreated I would take up my residence with her in town. But the former invitation was distasteful to me, and the latter would have carried me too far from May. For, from the first moment of our separation, an undefinable, vague fear possessed me which I attributed solely to my grief at Lord Eustace's conduct, that some great evil hovered over my child. And now I know that I was wrong—that it was a great good that was drawing nearer and nearer to release my darling from the coils by which my short-sighted folly had encompassed her.

. . . . . .

I took possession of my new home in February, by the end of which month Lord and Lady Eustace Annerley had returned to Castle Rivers from Gentian's Cross. I had been much at the latter place during my child's visit there; and her looks and demeanor greatly disturbed me. I have said how altered she was on her return from abroad, but from the time I parted with her in her own house she palpably declined. Everybody noticed it, and I even went the length of trampling on my aversion to speaking to Lord Eustace, and begged of him to have medical advice on her condition. He refused, however, to see what all saw plainly; declared I had always been foolishly nervous about my daughter, and that it was the natural effect of a girl's rapid growth that gave her such a cough, and made her look thin and pale. When I continued to expostulate with him, he said, if I was not satisfied, he would take his wife abroad again. He had no objection even to making his residence in Paris. It was all one to him where he lived. But his proposal silenced me. I

knew it could not be "all one" to May. So I tried to content myself with pointing out the necessity of care and caution on her part, and entreating her to avoid changes of temperature and over-exertion.

May laughed, and promised to do all I asked her, but where was ever the use of exhorting a girl of seventeen to look after her own health? At that age it is almost impossible to realize we can be ill. To every entreaty I put forward, or fear I expressed, May answered in the same light tone, "It's nothing, mother!" and I felt all I could do for my own child now was to pray and to wait.

It is marvelous to think how, when I was left alone in my solitary cottage in Dublin, to take up the burden of a new existence as I best might, the stream of life seemed to flow backward, so that my thoughts appeared, in a great measure, to lose their clinging hold upon May, and to live more in the past with Hugh. It was the first time since my young husband's death that I had lived alone (except those few days in Paris, when I had dwelt so entirely with his memory), and the soothing influence of that period seemed to be renewed with my solitary life. My heart was filled with anxiety for the happiness of my own child, but my thoughts seemed to dwell more upon the coming bliss of heaven and the joy and the love that awaited me there, than they had ever done before.

It was the merciful preparation for what was before me. The divine will loosening the bonds that held me to this earth. The gradual revelation of a light that might otherwise have had the power to blind me. Once, as I knelt in prayer, wrestling with Heaven for some token of good, a great sense came over me of the presence of my guardian angel. I seemed to feel his touch, to hear the soothing accents of his voice—I almost believed that in the twilight I could trace the shadowy outline of his immortal form.

"Hugh! my dearest love!" I exclaimed, fervently; "thank God that you, at least, are happy; that no sorrow or sickness can touch you now. Oh! I believe (bitter as it would be to part with her) that I could be happier, knowing that our child was safe where you are, and that I was the only one left to battle with this miserable world, than I am now, fearing and dreading what each day may bring forth for our May."

And yet no angel appeared to tell me that my mother's heart had given utterance to a prophecy. At first I heard from May very often—every other day at least—and her letters were so full of pathetic cries after our reunion that they made my heart bleed. Sometimes they worked on me so powerfully, and my sense of desolation was so keen, that I almost made up my mind to appeal to Lord Eustace in person, and to pray of him (as one sinner may pray to another) to forgive any offense I might have committed against himself in former days, and to permit me to remain, if it were only in the position of a dependant, near the person of my child.

At last, what with my own trouble, and May's despairing letters, I believe (had it gone on a little longer) I should, in some such measure, have humbled myself before that man. But it was not to be. "*Had it gone on a little longer.*" Ah! it had but such a little, little while in which to go on still.

It was now the month of April. The spring was very backward and the weather was still extremely cold and damp, and sickness of all sorts was making havoc in the land. I never wrote a letter to May without entreating her to be careful of her throat and chest, but she never mentioned her health to me in return, and I trusted, in consequence, that no change for the worse had taken place in it.

One week, just about the time I mention, I missed her accustomed letter. At first, I naturally thought that pleasure or business had prevented her writing; then, as the days passed and I did not hear, I grew alarmed, and telegraphed to Lord Eustace to ask if his wife was ill. I waited with sickening anxiety for an answer to my telegram, but five or six hours went by and none had arrived. It was then about six o'clock in the evening. I did not know what to do. I would have given anything for a friend to turn to in my distress—for some one to speak words of assurance to me—to combat my doubts and laugh at

exaggerated fear; but I had no intimate friends in Dublin, and it was too late to think of setting off to Gentian's Cross.

Yet the silence and solitude of my home seemed intolerable to me, and, battling with a fierce sense of coming evil, I rushed up to my bedroom to assume my walking attire, with an idea of going to church, and there laying down my sorrow at the divine feet of Him who never fails to listen and console.

I had but crossed the threshold of my room when a knock sounded on the hall-door.

"Who can it possibly be at this time of night?" I thought to myself; and, shrinking from the idea of encountering a stranger in my then state of mind, I desired my servant to say that I could see no one. Still I heard a subdued commotion taking place in my little hall, and the sound of voices mingling more in confusion than in parley.

"What can it all mean?" I thought again as I stood motionless with my bonnet in my hand.

But the next thing that happened was my maid Parker running rapidly up the stairs, and into my presence, with a face white as ashes.

"Please come down-stairs at once, ma'am," she exclaimed without preface; "it's Miss May—Lady Eustace, I should say—and I'm afraid she's ill."

"Miss May! Lady Eustace!"

I waited to hear no more, but, pushing past the woman, had in another moment reached the lower floor.

My cook was standing at the foot of the stairs, wringing her hands.

"Oh, bless you! she's very bad," she said, as she caught sight of me. I heard the words, but I took no notice of them.

All my object at that moment was to reach the dining-room. As I entered it, I saw my house-maid (I had but the three servants) kneeling by something on the floor. I came up to her. There—stretched on the carpet—lay my darling—lifeless—insensible, with the blood flowing slowly from her mouth.

It was no time for giving way to useless sorrow. I helped the women to lift her on the sofa, and sent at once for a doctor. By the time he arrived, May had opened her eyes, but did not seem to understand where she was or how she came there. To the medical man's inquiries as to the shock she might have encountered, the fatigue she had undergone, I could answer nothing except that I was as ignorant as himself. The most inexperienced eye, however, could not but perceive that, from whatever cause, my child was in great danger; and when the doctor, having administered some restoratives, left her on the sofa (he would not even risk moving her up-stairs to bed), and closing the door, drew me out of the room into the passage, my heart beat wildly with my fear!

"This is your daughter, I presume, Mrs. Power?"

"It is my daughter, Lady Eustace Annerley. Tell me the worst at once, I entreat you. Is she dying?"

"She is in great danger."

"Where does that blood come from?"

"Her lungs! She has ruptured a vessel either from fatigue or excitement."

"Don't look at me for the reason, doctor; I can tell you nothing except that on hearing of her arrival I ran down-stairs to find her in this condition. I did not expect to see her; I have no notion why she came."

"You had no reason to suspect she was on her road to you?"

"Not the slightest!"

The doctor looked very grave and uncertain what to say next.

"Of course, never having seen Lady Eustace before, it is impossible for me to determine what her previous state of health may have been. But I have no hesitation in declaring that it is very precarious at the present moment. There is no necessity for my remaining in the room with her, but I think it advisable I should not leave the house for an hour or so."

"You think she is dying? I am sure you think she is dying!"

"I will just go in again and have another look at her," he repied, with professional caution, as he reëntered the dining-room with me.

We found my darling lying just as we

had left her, with her mournful eyes open, and roving aimlessly about the room. But as I approached the couch she recognized me.

"Mothie!" she uttered feebly.

"Come, come! we are better," said the doctor; "but I must enjoin perfect silence, if you please."

"Don't speak, my precious!" I exclaimed, as I knelt down and pressed my lips to her sweet, pallid face. "I am close beside you and I will not leave you for a moment, May; but be silent, my own dear, for Heaven's sake."

She did not answer, but she smiled faintly and pressed my hand.

"If you please, ma'am, Lady Eustace's things are just dripping," said my maid.

I passed my hand over her dress, and under-clothing, and found to my horror they were wet through and through.

"How could this have happened? She will catch her death of cold," I exclaimed, in distress.

"I should advise you not to attempt to change them at present," said the doctor as he felt her pulse. "The exertion would be too much in her condition. Make Lady Eustace as comfortable as you can under the circumstances, but move her as little as possible!"

And so my dying child was propped up by pillows, and covered with shawls and blankets, while the clock ticked out the weary minutes, and the hours of night drew near.

My dying child! I knew she was my dying child, although no one had told me so. I saw the impress of Death upon her face. And, strange to say, the thought did not startle me. I seemed to have known that it would be so all along. When her fluttering pulse had regained a little strength, the doctor left us, promising to call the last thing that night.

I had dismissed the servants and sat down to watch by my darling's side. She opened her feeble lips to speak to me.

"May! my own child, pray remember what the doctor said—that talking would be hurtful to you. I can understand if I do not know, and I will hear all you may have to say to-morrow."

"There will be no to-morrow for me," she whispered, "and I *must* speak, or my heart will burst."

I knew her words were true. I knew that to-morrow would dawn to find me desolate, and I had not the courage to check the last words my own child would say to me.

"Nearer to me!" said May, "nearer!"

I crept as close to her pillow as I could, and bent my ear down to her cold lips.

"I know *all!*" she gasped; "he told me."

"May, I cannot believe it!"

"How I love you for it!" she continued; "how little I have appreciated the devotion of your life to me! O mothie! I have been so selfish—so vain—so thoughtless!"

"You have *not!*" I cried, in my despair. "O my beloved child! you have been all the world to me. There will be none when you are gone."

"I am so glad I married him instead of you. I can forgive him for myself. I should have killed him if he had treated you as he has treated me."

"My darling, what has he done?"

"*He struck me, mother!*"

Oh! as she said the words, how I should have liked to have had a knife in my hand, and her murderer at my feet! At that moment I was worse than himself.

"He had taken one of my letters to you, and we had had a quarrel (we have had nothing but quarrels since we married); and he spoke of that French woman—and of *you*, my darling—and told me he had never loved me. And then I said that I would go back to my mother, who did—and he—he—struck me for it."

"The coward!" I exclaimed.

"Yes; it was cowardly, but it was kind. It gave me an excuse for leaving him—and it rained—it rained very much," she went on in a rambling sort of way, "and I walked to the station—"

"You walked from Castle Rivers to the station, my darling? Why, it's twelve miles!"

"Yes; and then I lost my way, and I got wet—and I don't quite know how I got here, mothie; but I shall never go aw

again, shall I, darling? You won't let him come and take me away again?"

"Never! never! my beloved child," I cried.

"Oh! you have been so good to me," said May. "I have been such a worry and a bother to you ever since I was born—so selfish and so perverse—and you have loved me through it all for Hugh's sake."

"I have loved you for your own, my treasure."

"And now it will soon be over. I feel so weak—as if I were sinking through the sofa—and I am so glad—so very glad—to go. *He* sha'n't take me away—shall he, mothie?" with a sudden fear.

"Never, my darling," I repeated, through my tears; "but, May, I had better send for Father Nolan. You would like to see a priest, I know."

"Yes! I had better see a priest," she said, in the same mechanical way, as her head fell back upon her pillows, and her eyes gazed up to heaven.

She looked alarmingly ill. I hastened to call my servants and send one of them for my confessor before I took up my station again by her side. But my last thought for her had come too late.

"Mother," she said with a sudden effort, "*I forgive him.* And—I—love you—more—than I—can say—"

I believed her last moment was come, and raised her dear head till it rested on my bosom. But she lifted herself by a surprising effort and sat bolt upright.

"Hugh!" she exclaimed in her natural voice, "have you come for me? Oh! how young you look! But I should have known you anywhere by the portrait. How glad dear mother will be! She has longed for you so!"

But here the sudden strength born of the approaching change, now close at hand, died out again, and she sunk back in my arms, whispering faintly,

"Lord Jesu—mercy—" and closed her tender eyes.

I was gazing at them, wondering in a *foolish, stricken sort of* way, what I should *feel to find that they* had closed forever, *when they reopened.*

"*Mothie!*" she breathed below her breath, and closed them again, as the dark, fatal stream reissued from her mouth, and stained the lips I pressed upon it.

For a few minutes I watched her sweet breast heave gently up and down, as her young life ebbed away. Then her eyelids fluttered—her nostrils dilated—her mouth slightly opened, and she was gone.

As Father Nolan entered the room to administer the last sacraments for the dying, I laid my own child back upon the pillows—a corpse!

. . . . . .

"The first word she ever uttered," I kept on repeating to myself that night, "was *Hugh!* The last she said was *mothie!* Mine and yours, dear husband! Yours and mine! No one shall ever have the power again to take our own child from us."

And I think I almost felt glad, with a kind of delirious triumph, that May had made her escape from sin and sorrow—that she was beyond the reach of any man—that no mortal would have the power again to separate us.

The next morning, when my beautiful child was lying quietly upon my bed, looking like a sculptured saint, with her white hands crossed upon her bosom, and a golden aureole about her brow, I sent word to Gentian's Cross and Castle Rivers of what had happened. But before my message could possibly have reached him, I was told that Lord Eustace was waiting to speak to me in the drawing-room.

I went to meet him, calm and composed, oh! wonderfully calm, considering *what* lay still and silent upon my bed up-stairs.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Power," he commenced, curtly.

"Good-morning, Lord Eustace."

"Is my wife here?"

"She is!"

"When did she arrive?"

"Last night!"

"You speak very coolly on the subject, considering the disgrace it is to both of us. Do you know of the shameful manner in which she left her home?"

"She told me!"

"And you encourage her, I suppose, in

ıer rebellion. However, I cannot permit ny family name to be disgraced in this way, ınd therefore I have followed Lady Eustace vith the design of giving her her choice of ,wo alternatives. She must either return vith me at once to Castle Rivers or I shall epudiate her. Can I see her?"

"If you please!"

I turned as I spoke, and led the way up-tairs, Lord Eustace following me.

As I turned the key of my bedroom-door felt a spark of pity. Was this, indeed, a rial too great for his strength, to which I vas about to subject him? But no! He ıad deserved all that he might feel—and the hock might prove to be the salvation of his uture.

So I went ruthlessly on, leading him traight up to the bed on which his wife vas lying, like a broken snow-drop prostrate vith the earth.

"DEAD!" he exclaimed, starting back-vard.

I never saw a man change so marvel-usly. The blood seemed to retreat from very feature, and he stood holding on to he bed-post, shaking like a leaf blown by he autumn wind.

"Yes! *dead*," I repeated, "and you illed her, Eustace Annerley!"

"No! no! As there is a God in heav-n, *no*," he said, somewhat recovering him-elf.

"Not by so many blows, Lord Eustace," replied, "nor any active means, perhaps; ut by deliberate thwarting of all her inno-ent desires, and miscomprehension of her ature. I do not say that under any cir-umstances my darling would have lived, for he immediate causes of her death must have esulted from seed sown long ago, but I can ay that I thank God for having removed ıer beyond the possibility of your cruelty and want of care. You wished to revenge yourself on me. You have amply done it. You have deprived me of what constituted my whole world. Be content with your triumph, and leave me in peace with my dead child. I ask nothing further at your hands."

"But you will believe me when I say I never thought of this, Mrs. Power?"

"You have seldom thought of anything beyond the gratification of the moment, I imagine, Lord Eustace."

"But if it is any comfort to you to know —if I could in any way console you—" he began.

"*Comfort! consolation!*" I said, shrinking from him. "Do you suppose I could ever feel either in your presence? Eustace Annerley, I have but one wish connected with you now. That I may never see your face, nor hear your voice in this world again."

And I never have!

. . . . . .

Now there remains very, very little to be told. I am still living, or I could not write these words. And that of which I have written happened so long ago that I cannot only speak of it calmly, but think of it with more of pleasure than of pain!

For my hair is white with the snows of age, and my steps are descending slowly but surely to the grave!

And when I lie down in my bed each night, it is with a good hope that before many more are over I may lie down in it never to rise again until two bright radiant angels, whom they call Hugh and May, come hand-in-hand to conduct me between them to those shores of eternal youth and life and love where disappointment and separation are unknown.

THE END.

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